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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Bill on women quota to increase LS seats to 850

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Centre has circulated 'The Delimitation Bill, 2026' among MPs ahead of a special Parliament session, seeking to replace the 2002 law and enable fresh delimitation based on the latest census. Lok Sabha seats will be increased to up to 850 from the current 543, and women's reservation will be at 33 per cent, operationalised by the 2029 polls. The bill empowers the government to set up a Delimitation Commission. Opposition parties criticised the bills, saying that southern states will be disadvantaged, while activists urged the Centre to separate women's reservation from delimitation. *—PTI*

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Nirav Modi case in Europe to become confidential

STRASBOURG, 14 APRIL

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has granted anonymity to Nirav Modi, taking his case out of public view. The court will treat his case as confidential, and proceedings will occur away from the public eye. The ECHR press office confirmed that if an applicant has been granted anonymity, no further information can be provided. A hearing on Modi's plea is expected within two weeks, involving the Central Bureau of Investigation, which may lead to a verdict. Rejecting his plea could clear the final legal obstacle for his extradition from the UK. Modi, accused of orchestrating a Rs 13,000 crore fraud with Mehul Choksi, remains lodged in Wandsworth prison since 2019. *—PTI*

2,926 candidates to contest WB elections

KOLKATA, 14 APRIL

Following nomination withdrawals, 2,926 candidates are contesting the upcoming West Bengal assembly elections, the Election Commission has announced. In the first phase, 1,478 candidates will vie across 152 constituencies; in the second, 1,448 candidates are competing in 142 constituencies. Nominations for the second phase closed on April 9, with scrutiny on 10 April and withdrawals permitted until 13 April. The Election Commission stated that the process is now fully prepared for the next stage. Returning officers will notify candidates in the official gazette, and voters can access candidate details via the ECINet app. Polling is scheduled for 23 and 29 April. *—PTI*

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People cover their heads due to the heat in Bengaluru *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

North K'taka bakes under scorching heat

BIDAR/BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

In 2026, the heat in Karnataka has been rising each day, with North Karnataka regions witnessing a temperature rise of up to 41°C, creating distress among people.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecasted extreme sun intensity for the day, adding to public concern across the state.

There is a possibility of temperatures soaring beyond limits today in several districts of North Karnataka, including the capital City Bengaluru.

Meanwhile, in parts of South Karnataka, rising temperatures may be accompanied by light evening showers.

In Bengaluru, the heat has been intense since morning, with temperatures expected to reach around 38°C, according to the Meteorological Department.

In North Karnataka districts such as Kalaburagi, Raichur, Ballari, and Vijayapura, the heat will be severe. Temperatures in Kalaburagi and Bagalkote are likely to cross 41°C, along with the impact of hot winds.

Meanwhile, Belagavi, Dharwad, Gadag, and Haveri districts may receive light rain accompanied by thunder in the evening, as per IMD forecasts.

In coastal regions, including Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada, although the maximum temperature may be around 37°C, people are expected to experience intense heat due to low humidity.

The weather department has also indicated partly cloudy conditions in the evening.

Additionally, the IMD has indicated that isolated showers may occur in parts of Karnataka after 17 April.

According to health experts, people are advised to stay hydrated and take special care of kids, elderly people and those with medical conditions. *—Salar News*

BJP set to get its first CM in Bihar

As Bihar says bye to Nitish, Samrat to take over

PATNA, 14 APRIL

Bihar is on the course to having its first BJP-led government with JD(U) president Nitish Kumar resigning as chief minister on Tuesday and the ruling NDA backing Samrat Choudhary of the saffron party to take his place.

Choudhary, who was a Deputy Chief Minister, was named the NDA legislative party leader in the presence of Kumar, now a Rajya Sabha member.

"All NDA legislators have unanimously backed Choudhary as their leader. A new government will be formed tomorrow," Assembly Speaker and senior BJP leader Prem Kumar said after the meeting, which was attended by all MLAs of the alliance.

Choudhary's appointment, if confirmed, would end months of suspense. JD(U) sources said Nitish Kumar's son Nishant, who had joined the party a month ago, was not keen on the Deputy Chief Minister's post.

Earlier in the day, Choudhary was elected the leader of the BJP legislature party. The BJP is the single largest party in the 243-strong Bihar assembly with 89 MLAs.

Choudhary, who had cut his teeth in politics with the RJD and joined the BJP only in 2017, thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for reposing their trust in him.

However, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav teased Choudhary by reminding him that he was "a product of Lalu (Prasad) ji's school". Yadav also alleged that Choudhary did "not have the approval of the people", referring to the fact that the NDA had won the assembly polls with Kumar as its face.

Meanwhile, Kumar, the longest-serving chief minister of Bihar, spoke of the efforts he had made since first assuming power on 24 November, 2005 in a post on X. *—PTI*

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Former CM Nitish Kumar greets Bihar Deputy Chief Minister and likely next CM Samrat Choudhary during a NDA meeting in Patna, on Tuesday *—PTI*

UN: Iran war may push 25L people in India into poverty

UNITED NATIONS, 14 APRIL

The conflict in West Asia threatens to push 25 lakh people in India into poverty, according to estimates and projections by the United Nations. India is also projected to experience some loss in its human development progress.

Poverty in India is expected to rise from around 4 lakh to 25 lakh, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report titled 'Military Escalation In The Middle East: Human Development Impacts Across Asia And The Pacific' said on Tuesday.

It said that the number of people pushed into poverty in the world as a result of the conflict rises from approximately 19 lakh to nearly 88 lakh across scenarios, with South Asia accounting for the largest share, ranging from about 17 lakh to over 8 lakh, depending on the length of the war. This could cause cost Asia-Pacific up to USD 299 billion.

"Through higher fuel, freight, and input costs, the shock is diminishing household purchasing power, raising food insecurity, straining public budgets, and weakening livelihoods," it added.

Notably, China is estimated to experience a more moderate increase in the number of people at risk of falling into poverty, from around 1.15 lakh to over 6.2 lakh, reflecting small proportional changes applied to a very large population base.

It said that India's Human Development Index (HDI) could decline by the equivalent of one and a half years of human development progress.

"Any prolonged disruption would coincide with the preparations for the Kharif (the monsoon cropping season), which begins in June. Urea stocks stood at 61.1 lakh tons, providing a near-term buffer but not fully insulating the sector if disruptions persist," it added. *—PTI*

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India saw 3x increase in crude oil purchases from Russia in March, taking it to 5.3 billion euro.

Trump dials PM, says 'we love you'

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump held a 40-minute phone call on Tuesday, reviewing progress in bilateral ties and discussing the West Asia crisis.

Modi said both leaders stressed the need to keep the Strait of Hormuz open and secure.

Modi called Trump his "friend" in a post on X and said that We also discussed the situation in West Asia and stressed the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure".

US envoy Sergio Gor said the two sides may soon finalise major deals, including in energy.

The call ended with Trump telling Modi that: "I just want you to know we all love you", according to Gor.

This is the third call between the two this year, but assumes significance amid the war. *—PTI*

11 killed in blast at Vedanta Chh'garh plant

SAKTI, 14 APRIL

Eleven workers lost their lives and 21 others were injured following a boiler explosion at Vedanta Limited's power plant in Sakti district, Chhattisgarh. The incident occurred in Singhitarai village in the afternoon, according to police reports. Sakti Superintendent of Police Prafull Thakur confirmed, "Nine workers have died, and 15 have sustained injuries," with three victims dying on-site and others succumbing at hospitals in neighbouring Raigarh district. The injured are receiving treatment there. Local authorities and rescue teams quickly responded, evacuating staff from the extremely hot area around the boiler. Rescue efforts are ongoing to determine if more individuals are trapped.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai called the incident "extremely tragic" and assured support for the families affected. A probe will be conducted, and strict action will be taken against those responsible, he stated in Raipur. The plant management said, "An unfortunate incident occurred at one of the boiler units involving personnel from our sub-contractor, NGSL," adding their priority is to provide medical assistance and coordinate with authorities. The investigation is underway, and further details are awaited. *—PTI*

Smoke rises from the power plant, in Chhattisgarh's on Tuesday *—PTI*

CM's political secy sacked after Davangere bypoll row

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's political secretary Naseer Ahmed was "relieved with immediate effect" on Tuesday after allegedly working against the party during the recent Davangere South Assembly bypoll.

Even after the party fielded Samarth Shamanur, the grandson of 94-year-old MLA Shamanur Shivashankarappa whose death necessitated the bypoll, some Congress leaders wanted a Muslim candidate to get the ticket, owing to the significant minority population in the constituency.

These leaders were accused of working against Samarth, and there was allegedly rumbling in the ruling Congress.

Congress MLC Abdul Jabbar resigned as president of the KPCC Minority Cell earlier. *—PTI*

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AMBEDKAR JAYANTHI

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and DyCM DKS during Ambedkar Jaytanthi, marking his 135th birth anniversary at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Tuesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

UP hikes wages after Noida protests

NOIDA, 14 APRIL

The Uttar Pradesh government has increased minimum wages across worker categories following protests in Noida, with revised rates effective retrospectively from 1 April.

In Gautam Buddh Nagar district and Ghaziabad, unskilled workers will now receive Rs 13,690 per month, while semi-skilled and skilled workers will earn Rs 15,059 and Rs 16,868 respectively. For other municipal corporation areas, wages have been fixed at Rs 13,006 for unskilled, Rs 14,306 for semi-skilled, and Rs 16,025 for skilled workers. In remaining districts, unskilled workers will get Rs 12,356, semi-skilled Rs 13,591, and skilled Rs 15,224 monthly. ***—PTI***

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Belagavi woman murdered in honour killing

BELAGAVI, 14 APRIL

A 24-year-old woman was allegedly murdered by her family in a suspected case of honour killing here, police said on Tuesday.

The victim's brother, uncle and brother-in-law, have been arrested.

The woman, Satyavva Santosh Helavi, had reportedly left her husband and eloped with a man.

Angered over 'loss' of family honour, her relatives allegedly tracked her down to Shirol in Maharashtra.

Police said the suspects took her forcibly to Araga and administered poison. Later, they burnt her body to destroy evidence.

The incident came to light after a missing person complaint was registered at the Yamakanmardi police station. The case, which had initially gone cold, was later reopened and solved by Inspector Javed Mushapure.

Officials said the victim was traced on 13 March by her family, who reportedly tried to persuade her to return and agree to a marriage within their community. Police arrested the victim's uncle Prakash Bhimappa Helavar, 46, her brother Shanur Sadashiv Helavar, 35, and her brother-in-law Morabad Kallappa Mayappa Helavi, 40. *— Salar News*

CHINA MAINTAINS ITS POLICY IS TO IMPROVE INDIA RELATIONS

BEIJING, 14 APRIL

China said its policy to enhance relations with India remains unchanged, amid controversy over new names for regions in Arunachal Pradesh. China defended its move to publish new names, asserting its sovereign rights. India rejected China's efforts, calling them baseless and a threat to bilateral ties, especially after Beijing established a new administrative county in Aksai Chin, claimed by India. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson confirmed that Zangnan, the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh, is China's territory, and China does not recognise the Indian-designation. The spokesperson expressed hope that both sides would improve relations. China announced a third new county in Xinjiang near the Pakistan border, further complicating disputes. *—PTI*

'FORCED TO TAKE THEM'

Covid vaccines killed Shane Warne: Son

SYDNEY, 13 APRIL

Four years after Shane Warne's death left the cricketing world in shock, his son Jackson has asserted that the spin legend's demise was probably caused by the "three or four" Covid vaccines that he was "forced to take for work."

Speaking on '2 Worlds Collide podcast', Jackson, however, also acknowledged that his father had underlying health issues.

Warne was 52 when he died in Thailand in 2022 after suffering a heart attack.

"I definitely think that it (COVID vaccine) was involved...My first impression, as soon as I hung up the phone (after receiving the news of Warne's death), I instantly blamed the government. I instantly blamed Covid and the vaccine," Jackson said.

Jackson said he barely managed to stop himself from vocalising his exact thoughts at the memorial service.

"Yes, a lot of people were dying of heart attacks before. But dad was okay, I think he might have got three or four (vaccine doses), he didn't want to get them, he was forced to get them for work," he asserted.

Giving an insight into the lifestyle of his father, who was known to be indulgent, Jackson said it was relatively healthy despite the smoking and drinking.

"Dad, at the time, was healthy, he was happy. He looked the best he had in a while. Yes, he smoked and drank, but so many more people in their 80s and 90s still smoke and drink a lot more than dad," he said. *—PTI*

Jackson Warne with his dad Shane Warne *–x*

Bypoll fallout: CM summons Zameer after sacking secy

The minister says never hid desire for Muslim candidate; DKS calls for discipline

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah summoned Housing, Minority Welfare and Waqf Minister, BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan to his home office over the Davangere South bypoll fallout after a government order said that political secretary Naseer Ahmed was relieved from his post with immediate effect.

The details of the meeting were not immediately clear, but prior to the meeting, Khan told press that it was not a hidden fact that Muslim leaders demanded a ticket for someone from their community.

He said that on 20 March, Congress General Secretary and Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar had called a meeting at the Congress office, where more than 200 leaders from Davangere had participated, including a large number of minority leaders.

"I said in an open meeting: Please give us a Muslim candidate. Give Davangere to anyone (from the Muslim community). Nothing was said behind closed doors," Khan said.

However, the Congress fielded Samarth Shamanur, grandson of MLA Shamanur Shivashankarappa whose death necessitated the bypoll on 9 April. Samarth is the son of Karnataka Mines and Geology Minister SS Mallikarjun.

Muslim leaders, angered by this reportedly refrained from campaigning for Samarth, in a constituency which has a significant Muslim presence.

Regarding Ahmed's removal, Khan said, "The CM had asked him to go to Davangere, and since he didn't go, a decision has been taken."

CM Siddaramaiah, minister BZ Zameer, MLA Rizwan Arshad at Ambedkar Jayanthi event at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Tuesday —*MOHAMMED*

> **When Congress Rajya Sabha MP Nasser Hussain's supporters shouted "Pakistan Zindabad" slogans at Vidhana Soudha, I prophesised in the House in February 2024 that excessive Muslim appeasement would one day ruin the Congress. Leaders of Congress should wake up... otherwise, the same fate that befell the Congress party in states like Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Bihar, and others will come to Karnataka**
> —R Ashoka, Leader of Opposition

Meanwhile, Shivakumar said that decision to remove Ahmed came after multiple reports, and called for discipline in the party ranks.

"If there is no discipline in any party, nothing can function," Shivakumar, who is also the State Congress President, said. "There is nothing wrong with holding meetings or asking for posts; please do. But one must maintain strict discipline. That is my humble request."

He added that the decision to field Samarth was made after taking everyone into confidence and after multiple reports.

Asked about the specific allegations against certain leaders, he said he was awaiting further clarity on the matter.

"We, too, had received some reports. Another report has to come on what exactly happened (in Davangere South); I am waiting for it," the Deputy Chief Minister said. —*PTI*

'Crackdown on prison contraband underway'

TUMAKURU, 14 APRIL

Home Minister G Parameshwara said the State government has initiated stringent measures to curb the supply of contraband, including ganja and mobile phones, in prisons across Karnataka.

"For many days, as you are aware, in Parappana Agrahara Jail, they had been supplying ganja to several prisons across the State, and were also providing mobile phones. Such activities had come to the notice of the government," he said on Tuesday.

To address the issue, the government appointed senior officials to investigate and take corrective action. "At that time, we felt that all this must be curbed by appointing a senior officer — to find out why this is happening and who all are involved, including whether any of our own personnel are involved," he said.

The minister said the appointment of Alok Kumar as Director General of Police (Prisons) had begun yielding results, with increased detection of violations.

"After he took charge, these issues have been increasingly coming to light in all prisons. The police have also been conducting surprise raids and making detections," he said.

Highlighting structural reforms, he said advanced surveillance systems have been introduced.

"These CCTV systems are equipped with Artificial Intelligence (AI) cameras that can even capture audio -- I mean conversations can also be heard at the headquarters," he added.

He asserted that the government's intent was to eliminate such activities entirely and ensure accountability within the prison system, warning of strict disciplinary action against erring staff, including dismissal from service. —*PTI*

SISA announces Quantum security course

BELAGAVI, 14 APRIL

On World Quantum Day, SISA, a global cybersecurity company focused on the payments sector, announced the launch of its Certified Quantum Security Professional (CQSP) programme. The company said it is the world's first ANAB-accredited certification in quantum security, with ANAB being the accreditation body of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

The programme aims to prepare professionals and organisations for the next major shift in cybersecurity driven by advances in quantum computing.

SISA noted that quantum computers capable of breaking current encryption systems are getting closer to reality, while many countries are targeting readiness for post-quantum cryptography (PQC) by 2035.

JBV Reddy from the Ministry of Science and Technology said the initiative would help build certified expertise and strengthen India's cybersecurity ecosystem.

SISA warned quantum computing could significantly impact global payment systems, which rely on encryption to secure transactions and data. It added, transitioning to quantum-safe encryption will be complex and time-consuming, especially as many organisations lack full visibility of their cryptographic systems today. —*PTI*

IN A HUDDLE

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar in a conversation with AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan during the Ambedkar Jayanthi programme at KPCC office in Bengaluru on Tuesday. *PHOTO: SALAR*

Belagavi Diocese condemns Trump's remarks on Pope Leo

BELAGAVI, 14 APRIL

- Bishop Fernandes said the Pope's criticism of war and his appeal for peace, reconciliation and dialogue among nations are firmly rooted in truth and justice

Belagavi Diocese Bishop Derek Fernandes has strongly condemned the disparaging remarks allegedly made by US President Donald Trump against the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, describing them as deeply offensive, morally unacceptable and hurtful to the millions of Catholics around the world.

In a press release issued on Tuesday, Bishop Fernandes said the Pope's criticism of war and his appeal for peace, reconciliation and dialogue among nations are firmly rooted in truth, justice and the Gospel. He observed that the Pope's call for peace was not a matter of political convenience, but a sacred duty entrusted to him by Christ.

He criticized the contradiction in advocating nuclear armament for some nations while denying it to others. Bishop Fernandes asked why nations should have nuclear weapons and reiterated the Church's stand in favour of universal disarmament. He termed Trump's remarks as irresponsible and sought an unconditional apology from him.

Bishop Fernandes said peace is not weakness, it is strength. Respect is not optional, it is essential. And leadership worthy of the name, must always stand on the side of truth and justice, he said. —*Salar News*

10-year-old girl dies in a freak accident on sari swing

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 14 APRIL

A 10-year-old girl died in a tragic accident after a makeshift swing made of a sari tightened around her neck while she was playing at her residence in Hebbale village of Chikkamagaluru taluk on Monday evening.

The deceased, Lekhana, 10, was alone at home when the incident occurred, as her parents had stepped out.

According to police, the child attempted to play on a swing fashioned using a sari tied inside the house. During the course of play, the sari accidentally got entangled around her neck. Despite efforts to free herself, she was unable to escape and died of suffocation on the spot.

Her parents returned home to find her dead, leading to scenes of grief and distress.

On being alerted, personnel from the Chikkamagaluru Rural Police Station rushed to the spot and carried out an inspection.

A case has been registered, and further investigation is underway. —*SALAR NEWS*

Traffic arrangements made ahead of IPL match in City

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

In view of the IPL cricket match on 15 April at M Chinnaswamy Stadium here, Bengaluru Traffic Police on Tuesday said that elaborate arrangements have been made to ensure smooth movement of vehicles in the City.

According to the traffic police, Parking will be prohibited on several roads around the stadium, including Queens Road, MG Road, Link Road, Raj Bhavan Road, T Chowdaiah Road, Race Course Road, Central Street and Cubbon Road.

The parking ban will also apply to St Mark's Road, Museum Road, Kasturba Road, Lavelle Road and Vittal Mallya Road.

Parking will also be strictly prohibited inside Cubbon Park.

Spectators can park their vehicles at designated locations such as St Joseph's Indian High School Ground, St Joseph's European School Ground, Freedom Park multi-level car parking, Garuda Mall parking, Shivajinagar Bus Stand (first floor), UB City parking and Sree Kanteerava Stadium, the traffic advisory stated.

Entry to the stadium will be allowed through designated gates on Cubbon Road, Link Road and Queens Road, while specific gates have been earmarked for exit. Gate E-10 on Queens Road is reserved for players, support staff, VIPs.

BRV Ground and Manekshaw Parade Ground will be for Pick-up, drop-off points for Ola, Uber and autorickshaws. —*PTI*

FESTIVE FERVOUR

Members of the Sikh community hold special prayers at Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara at Ulsoor to celebrate Vaisakhi (Sikh New Year), in Bengaluru, on Tuesday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

PM Modi likely to visit Karnataka on 15 April

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit the State on 15 April as part of a one-day tour that includes an official programme in Mandya district.

The Prime Minister is likely to depart from Delhi at 7.15am aboard an Indian Air Force B-777 aircraft and arrive at HAL Airport in Bengaluru at 10.05am, according to a tentative schedule shared by the BJP leaders here.

He will shortly proceed by an MI-17 helicopter to Mandya, where he is expected to land at 10.50am.

"He will reach Sri Kshetra Adichunchanagiri at 11am and take part in the inauguration of Sri Guru Bhairavaikya Mandira at noon," the tentative tour programme stated.

From the Mandya helipad, the Prime Minister will travel by road to Sri Kshetra Adichunchanagiri, the venue of the programme.

Following the inauguration event, he will depart from the venue at 12.05pm and return to the Mandya helipad by 12.10pm.

He is scheduled to leave Mandya at 12.15pm by helicopter and arrive back at HAL Airport, Bengaluru, at 12.55pm. —*PTI*

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Cong seeks Bharat Ratna for Balagangadharanatha

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Hosakote MLA Sharath Bachegowda and MLC Dinesh Gooligowda have urged the government to confer a posthumous Bharat Ratna award Shri Dr Balagangadharanatha Mahaswamiji.

In a letter to CM Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Union Ministers HD Kumaraswamy, Pralhad Joshi, Shobha Karandlaje, and V Somanna, they said that the 71st Pontiff of the Adichunchanagiri Mahasamsthana Mutt in Mandya district was a visionary who "played a pivotal role in shaping modern Karnataka".

"Considering his immense contributions in the fields of social service, education, and spirituality, it is the aspiration of millions of devotees and Kannadigas that he be conferred with the nation's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna," they stated. "A true Yuga Yogi, he accomplished in just 33 years.

They said he set up over 500 educational institutes for the underprivileged and worked tirelessly to preserve Indian culture and sanatana dharma. -Salar News

KILLED VET EARLIER

Hippo 'Hamsini' dies in Shivamogga zoo

SHIVAMOGGA, 14 APRIL

- The eight month pregnant hippopotamus was suffering from severe infection as a result of intrauterine foetal death. A blood and fluid test confirmed it. She was no longer taking food

The 12-year-old female hippopotamus- Hamsini- into her third pregnancy at the Tyavarekoppa Tiger and Lion Safari in Shivamogga zoo on Tuesday died of 'severe infection' as a result of intrauterine foetal death.

The hippopotamus had recently made headlines after it attacked a trainee veterinarian Sameeksha Reddy at the zoo after she entered the animal's enclosure on 19 March 2026, to register its body temperature. The vet had later died at a private hospital during the treatment.

Informing about the female hippopotamus's death, Executive Director of the Safari VM Amarakshara said that she was eight months into her pregnancy and no longer taking food. A blood and fluid samples test in lab showed the female hippopotamus suffered from severe infection due to intrauterine foetal death. The infection was at a critical stage as it had spread to other parts of the animal's body, he said.

Hamsini had earlier delivered a calf in 2024 which however drowned in 2025. She gave birth to another calf in 2025 which also later died after being attacked by its father.

Hamsini was under the care of wildlife veterinarians deputed by the Karnataka Zoo Authority and consulting obstetrician-gynaecologist veterinarian being hired for the purpose of treating her.

The hippopotamus's death has also come amid reports of absence of a dedicated permanent wildlife veterinarian at the zoo, which is home about 300 animals. —*AGENCIES*

Kejriwal always attacks democratic institutions: Rekha

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday attacked former CM Arvind Kejriwal, accusing him of questioning democratic institutions and lacking accountability. "The person has targeted the CBI, ED, Election Commission of India, the Prime Minister, Lieutenant Governor, and even the judiciary whenever they spoke against him," she said. She asked what fear was troubling Kejriwal as he raised fingers at such strong pillars of democracy.Gupta further said, "The people of Delhi and the country are watching this behaviour." She added that AAP has failed the public. Kejriwal pleaded his case before Delhi High Court's Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma for her recusal from hearing the liquor policy matter. —*PTI*

Kunki's mom files NCW complaint against Himanta

GUWAHATI, 14 APRIL

Sujata Gurung Chowdhury, mother of AJP candidate Kunki Chowdhury, has filed a complaint with the National Commission for Women (NCW) against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. She alleges Sarma made false, malicious remarks during campaigning for the assembly elections aimed at defaming her and targeting her daughter politically. The complaint, submitted on 11 April, claims Sarma's statements intended to incite hatred and spread fake propaganda, including accusations that her social media posts supported Pakistan and involved offensive remarks about beef consumption. Chowdhury clarified the image was taken in Denver, Colorado, at the International Church of Cannabis, where a pillow was mistaken for meat. Sarma's allegations, her personal photoshave circulated widely online without consent. —*PTI*

'Will protest if delimitation curbs TN's power'

CHENNAI, 14 APRIL

Chief Minister **MK Stalin** on Tuesday warned of massive agitations bringing Tamil Nadu to a standstill and "protests with full force," if anything was done harming the state or if the political power of northern states was disproportionately increased in delimitation.

Reiterating his allegation that secrecy shrouds the proposed delimitation process, Stalin, in a video message, said that without consulting not just DMK but any political party or any state, BJP-led Centre was attempting to proceed unilaterally.

"At this moment, I wish to say something important to the Union BJP government and to the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. In the forthcoming Parliamentary session, our Members of Parliament will participate," he said. However, "if anything is done that harms Tamil Nadu, or that disproportionately enhances the political power of northern states, we in Tamil Nadu will not remain silent." The DMK Chief warned that TN will come to standstill. "Tamil Nadu will register its protest with full force. Every family will take to the streets. Under my leadership as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, we will organise a massive agitation," he said. —*PTI*

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a public rally in Tamluk in Purba Medinipur district in West Bengal on Tuesday —*PTI*

Didi: Logical discrepancy not EC term

Says it is selectively applied in Bengal to benefit BJP

KOLKATA, 14 APRIL

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday alleged that "logical discrepancy" under the SIR exercise is not an officially recognised term under the Election Commission framework and was selectively applied in West Bengal to benefit BJP

Addressing a public rally at Pingla in Paschim Medinipur district, Banerjee urged women to "stand firm" against security forces if attempts are made to prevent people from voting.

"I even moved the Supreme Court to protect your rights, and only after that, the names of 32 lakh voters were enlisted," she added.

Later in Tamluk in Purba Medinipur district, Banerjee questioned why such a large number of central forces were brought to West Bengal.

The CM asked people to lodge complaints against any police officer if they were "tortured".

The TMC supremo, urging people to vote against the BJP.

The BJP is holding rallies at places that have direct railway connectivity with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar so that they can bring in people from those states to fill up the venues, she alleged.

She alleged that "instructions have been given to arrest booth agents".

Elections to the 294-member assembly will be held in two phases on 23 and 29 April and votes will be counted on 4 May. —*PTI*

Will resolve Gorkha issue, says Shah

Says will address the issue without dividing state

GANGARAMPUR/ MANIKCHAK, 14 APRIL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said the BJP, if voted to power in West Bengal, will resolve the Gorkha issue in the Darjeeling hills in a constitutional manner without dividing the state.

Addressing a poll rally in Gangarampur in Dakshin Dinajpur district, Shah referred to the BJP's election manifesto to offer a host of north Bengal-centric development projects.

Despite the formation of the semi-autonomous Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2011 to administer the upper reaches of Darjeeeling and parts of the foothills, violent agitations took place till as late as 2017.

The region witnessed multiple twists and turns over political partnership between the local Gorkha parties and bigger players like the BJP and TMC. In the upcoming polls, the TMC is in a seat sharing alliance with the Anit Thapaled Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha a breakaway faction of Bimal Gurung's GJM, and has left the Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong seats to its partner. The BJP secured the support of Gurung Shah also participated in a road show at Kaliaganj in Uttar Dinajpur district and held public meetings.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually interacted with booth-level workers of the BJP in West Bengal on Tuesday via the NaMo App under the 'Mera Booth Sabse Majboot' programme. —*PTI*

Union Minister Amit Shah during a roadshow in Kaliaganj on Tuesday —*PTI*

LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses a public meeting at Samserganj in Murshidabad in West Bengal on Tuesday —*PTI*

Rahul: BJP's views harm Constitution

Says they are stealing votes, dubs SIR unconstitutional

RAIGANJ/MALDA, 14 APRIL

Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader, accused the BJP and RSS of destroying the Constitution with their "hate-filled thinking" during poll rallies in West Bengal. He criticised the ruling TMC for failing to deliver on promises of jobs for youth.

Gandhi stated that 84 lakh youths in Bengal had applied for unemployment allowances, far exceeding the five lakh promised by Mamata Banerjee.

Targeting the BJP and RSS, Gandhi claimed they are involved in vote theft and described the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls as "unconstitutional".

He alleged that BJP and RSS make insinuations against the Constitution whenever they get a chance, often pitting communities against each other based on religion and caste for electoral gain.

At the Malda rally, Gandhi promised to reinstate those wrongly removed from electoral rolls under SIR if Congress forms government. He criticised the TMC for causing joblessness in Bengal, accusing it of closing industries and running the state through syndicates.

He also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the India-US trade deal, claiming it would lead to job losses and that Modi is a "traitor" for selling India out. —*PTI*

543 SEATS AT PRESENT

Bill on women quota to increase LS seats to 850

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam bill to "operationalise" 33 per cent reservation to women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies by increasing the seats to 850 from 543 is set for introduction in Parliament on Thursday.

To redraw constituencies, the bill seeks to take into account the 2011 Census data. It seeks to amend Article 81 of the Constitution.

The expression "population", according to the bill, means the population as ascertained at such Census of which the relevant figures have been published.

The government plans to bring a Constitution amendment bill, a bill on delimitation law and an enabling bill for Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and Puducherry -- three Union territories with legislature to fast track implementation of the women's reservation Act of 2023.

The government has circulated copies the bills with the MPs on Tuesday.

"The next census and the consequential delimitation exercise thereafter will take considerable time and thus, delay the effective and dedicated participation of women in our democratic polity," says the statement of objects and reasons of the draft Constitution amendment bill.

Earlier the Congress lashed out at the government for not having shared with MPs the Constitution amendment bills, saying this makes a "complete mockery of democracy" and reveals the "bulldozer mentality" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Congress General Secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said the "special session" of Parliament will be held when the election campaign in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal will be at its peak.

Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi claimed that the reported delimitation proposal is "extremely dangerous" and an "assault" on the Constitution.

She also accused Modi of delaying the Census process.

TMC Rajya Sabha Leader Derek O'Brien also accused the Centre of "mocking the Parliament", and said that lawmakers were yet to be given the draft of the legislations for women's reservation and delimitation. —*PTI*

TN BJP manifesto promises Rs 2,000 for women, free LPG

CHENNAI, 14 APRIL

The BJP released its manifesto in Chennai on Tuesday for the upcoming Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu.

Key promises include providing monthly assistance of Rs 2,000 to women heads of households, a one-time grant of Rs 10,000 to every household if the party is voted to power, three LPG cylinders free of cost annually. The manifesto promised to tackle crimes against women.

Former BJP national president and **Union Minister JP Nadda** unveiled the manifesto—Pudhiya Yugam Padaikkum Thamarai

Vaakuruthi (Creating a New Era through Lotus Promise) 2026.

The poll manifesto, prepared by a 13-member committee under former Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, covers 12 subjects, including governance and law and order, social justice, women and child development, healthcare, and farmers' welfare.

The manifesto assures that Thaipoosam will be declared a state festival to honour Lord Muruga (Subrahmanya Swamy), and that the tradition of lighting the Karthigai Deepam at the Tirupparankundram hilltop will be resumed and protected.

The manifesto also promises a "ganja-free" state, a dedicated helpline for swift action, special fast-track courts, and capital punishment under the for repeat offenders. —*PTI*

TVK OFFERS WELFARE MEASURES FOR FARMERS, MSMES

TIRUPPUR, 14 APRIL

TVK Chief **Vijay** on Tuesday promised crop loan waivers for Tamil Nadu farmers and criticised the DMK government over the closure of many MSMEs in the state.

Addressing a rally, he announced he will release a detailed election manifesto on April 16. Vijay assured full loan waivers for small farmers with less than five acres, and a 50 per cent waiver for those with more than five acres. He also said Rs 3,500 per quintal would be paid for paddy and Rs 4,500 per ton for sugarcane.

Claiming a decline in the industrial sector, Vijay said many MSMEs have shut during the DMK regime,

which he sarcastically described as an achievement of the DMK. He pledged Rs 15,000 crore as a guarantee fund for weaker MSMEs, scrapped peak hour electricity charges, and offered five years of tax-free electricity.

He announced a state e-commerce platform to promote MSME products abroad, along with a 50 per cent subsidy for weavers purchasing raw materials. The pension for weavers will increase to Rs 3,000, and they will receive Rs 10 lakh insurance policies.

He said the old pension scheme for government employees will be considered, with regularisation for teachers, nurses, and writers with over five years' service. He promised to eliminate the "bribery culture" in promotions and ensure transparent transfers. For police personnel, basic salary will rise from Rs 18,200 to Rs 25,000, with the Police Welfare and Working Conditions Act regulating working hours. —*PTI*

BJP, TMC clash during WB poll campaign

KOLKATA, 14 APRIL

Workers of the BJP and TMC clashed in the Dhapa area of east Kolkata on Tuesday.

The incident happened when BJP's Entally candidate Priyanka Tibrewal was campaigning in ward 58 of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

An altercation, which started over playing songs on high-bass loudspeakers, soon escalated, leading to scuffles, police said.

However, central forces and the local police brought the situation under control, and Tibrewal was escorted out of the area along with other BJP workers.

Tibrewal demanded the suspension of the officers-in-charge of Tangra and Pragati Maidan police stations over the incident.

Tibrewal also alleged that despite having permission to campaign in the Dhapa and Tangra areas, BJP workers were being intimidated, and claimed that local police were not effectively deploying central forces.

TMC candidate Sandipan Saha accused the BJP of trying to instigate tension and polarise voters.

In a separate incident, BJP workers gheraoed the Baranagar Police Station in the northern outskirts of the city following a clash with TMC supporters during campaigning. TMC termed the incident a result of infighting within the BJP. —*PTI*

FROM DVPT TO POLITICAL FLIP-FLOPS

Nitish Kumar leaves behind a legacy of contradictions

PATNA, 14 APRIL

Nitish Kumar, who resigned as Bihar chief minister on Tuesday, leaves behind a mixed legacy even though the JD(U) president may have loved to be remembered solely as the architect of modern Bihar.

"Nyay ke saath vikas" is a slogan popularised by Kumar, now a Rajya Sabha MP, who had always been dependent upon the BJP for staying in power, but remained intent on underscoring his commitment to social justice and communal harmony.

Critics may point out that the product of Mandal agitation was handing over the state to the BJP in the only Hindi heartland state where the saffron party had so far failed to head a government.

Moreover, amid speculations that Kumar's son Nishant, who recently joined the JD(U), could be inducted into the new government as a deputy CM, despite not yet being a member of the state legislature, the carefully crafted image of a politician who never gave in to the allure of "dynasty politics" gets unmistakably dented.

When Kumar was Union minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government, he was projected as the "face of the NDA" while the BJP-led coalition was trying to upstage the formidable RJD, headed by Lalu Prasad, from Bihar.

Kumar took a keen interest in modernising the railways while he held the portfolio.

As Bihar's chief minister, Kumar rubbed shoulders with mafia dons while, empowering the police to establish the rule of law.

Bihar CM Nitish Kumar submits his resignation to Governor Syed Ata Hasnain in the presence of DyCM Samrat Choudhary & others in Patna—*PTI*

- As Bihar's CM, Kumar rubbed shoulders with mafia dons while, empowering the police to establish rule of law.

He will be remembered for schemes, the most daring being complete prohibition of alcohol in the state.

Kumar will be remembered for his numerous flip-flops. He now stands accused of "capitulation" before the BJP, but was a key architect of the INDIA bloc. —*PTI*

— PTI

Delhi to get plane, peacock-themed parks for children

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) will introduce seven themed children's parks across the city, aimed at making neighbourhoods more engaging. Parks in Janakpuri, Saket, Greater Kailash, Mayur Vihar, Swasthya Vihar (East Delhi), Karol Bagh, and Mayapuri (West Delhi) are being developed AMRUT funds. Each park will have a unique theme, such as an aeroplane in Janakpuri and a 20-25 foot peacock in Mayur Vihar, with play structures. Work is underway in Janakpuri and Mayur Vihar. The plan aims to improve accessibility for families, supported by revised policies allowing RWAs to maintain parks with MCD's aid. —*PTI*

Doctors' strike hits private hospitals in Rajasthan

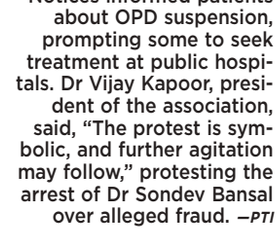
JAIPUR, 14 APRIL

Private healthcare services across Rajasthan were affected as doctors in private hospitals went on a 24-hour strike. The strike was called by the Indian Medical Association (IMA), Rajasthan Chapter, following the arrest of a hospital director in Jaipur. OPD services in private hospitals and nursing homes shut from 8 am on 14 April, although admitted patients continued treatment. Some hospitals suspended emergency services. Authorities increased arrangements at government hospitals. Notices informed patients about OPD suspension, prompting some to seek treatment at public hospitals. Dr Vijay Kapoor, president of the association, said, "The protest is symbolic, and further agitation may follow," protesting the arrest of Dr Sondev Bansal over alleged fraud. —*PTI*

Search on for man who fell into J&K stream

BANIHAL/JAMMU, 14 APRIL

Authorities have intensified a multi-agency search in Ramban district for a man feared to have fallen into a stream after being assaulted by cow vigilantes. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed, with four arrests made. Locals, including the victim's family, blocked the Jammu-Srinagar Highway for over four hours. Tanveer Ahmad Chopan, 25, from Ukhral tehsil, was travelling with a cow in his Tata Mobile when chased and assaulted on Sunday. Eyewitnesses say he jumped into Nallah Bishlari to escape. The search resumed after an overnight halt, with teams focusing on boulders and downstream areas, hoping for his early recovery as efforts continue on the third day. —*PTI*



— PTI

Kerala CM condemns BDS student's death

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 14 APRIL

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan described the recent suicide of a first-year BDS student at Ancharakandi Private Medical College, Kannur, as "painful and unacceptable." He stated that such incidents should not occur in a state like Kerala. The victim, Nithin Raj RL, 22, from Thiruvananthapuram, was found critically injured after falling from a building on 10 April, and later died. His family accused college faculty of mental harassment based on caste, leading to a case against Dr MK Ram and KT Sangeetha Nambiar for abetment of suicide and SC/ST offences. —*PTI*

300 arrested after Noida workers' violent protest

Many WhatsApp groups created in last 2 days, say cops

NOIDA, 14 APRIL

Gautam Buddh Nagar Police Commissioner Laxmi Singh said on Tuesday that around 300 individuals have been arrested and seven FIRs have been registered in connection with the violent workers' protest in Noida.

Singh said route marches were carried out since early morning to maintain law and order.

"Today morning, workers gathered at three places. After talks they dispersed in just 15 minutes," she said.

The police commissioner said that in the last two days, several WhatsApp groups have been created using QR codes to add workers, indicating the possible role of an organised network.

Singh said individuals involved in instigating unrest have been arrested, and action is underway.

"Certain elements in the crowd involved in such acts have been arrested. Their funding will also be investigated. If it is discovered that they received money from outside the state or country, action will be initiated," she said.

Singh said that in connection with incidents reported on Monday, seven FIRs have been filed. Referring to efforts to resolve the situation, the commissioner said a committee constituted by the state government has been holding discussions with stakeholders. Singh said the government is sensitive to workers' concerns and is committed to addressing their issues.

"The UP government understands the workers' grievances, empathises with them, and remains committed to resolving all their issues," she added. — *PTI*

Security personnel conduct a flag march in Sector 80 to maintain law and order amid workers' protest in Noida on Tuesday —*PTI*

HAWALA PROBE

I-PAC director Chandel sent to 10-day ED custody

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

A Delhi court sent I-PAC co-founder and director Vinesh Chandel to 10 days of ED custody after his arrest by the ED in a case linked to hawala funds allegedly received from political parties and other entities. The action comes days before the West Bengal and TN Polls, in which the organisation is providing consultancy to TMC and DMK.

ED officials said Chandel was arrested at 7.45 pm on Monday after questioning. He is a law graduate from NLIU Bhopal and a "key decision-maker" of I-PAC, as a 33 per cent shareholder of the company. He was produced at the residence of Additional Sessions Judge Shefali Barnala Tandon around 11.55 pm.

ED officials said Chandel was arrested in a case filed under PMLA on 28 March after taking cognisance of a Delhi Police FIR against Indian PAC Consulting Pvt Ltd (I-PAC) on charges of falsification of accounts and handling of unaccounted funds through its directors, who include Chandel, Pratik Jain, and Rishi Raj Singh.

This case is "linked" to the coal scam probe of West Bengal, they said.

The ED alleged that under Chandel's direction, I-PAC "adopted split receipts between accounted (banking channels) and unaccounted (cash) modes, thereby suppressing the true extent of its financial activities."

Meanwhile, the ED summoned the wife and brother of Pratik Jain, the co-founder and director of I-PAC, for questioning in a money laundering case, officials said on Tuesday. Barbie Jain and Pulkit Jain have been asked to depose before the ED at its Delhi headquarters on Wednesday. — *PTI*

Insurance: SC to hear plea for new norms

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Supreme Court sought responses from the Centre and the Life Insurance Corporation on a plea seeking a direction to the LIC to frame and implement disability-sensitive guidelines for welfare insurance schemes.

Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta agreed to hear the plea which sought a direction to the Centre to exercise policy oversight to ensure that welfare insurance schemes for persons with disabilities are implemented in conformity with the guarantees under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution.

While Article 14 deals with equality before law, Article 21 pertains to protection of life and personal liberty.

"Issue notice, returnable within four weeks," the bench said in its 13 April order.

The petition sought a direction to the LIC to frame and implement disability-sensitive guidelines for welfare insurance schemes, including the 'Jeevan Aadhar' policy.

The LIC's 'Jeevan Aadhar' policy may be offered to an individual who has a handicapped dependant satisfying conditions specified in Section 80DDA of the Income Tax Act, 1961. It provides life insurance cover throughout the lifetime of the purchaser.

Section 80DDA of the Income Tax Act pertains to deduction made for maintaining a handicapped dependant. — *PTI*

Keralam issues advisory against extreme heat

THIRU'PURAM, 14 APRIL

In view of rising temperatures in Kerala, the KSDMA has issued a comprehensive set of precautionary guidelines for the public.

The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA), in a post on social media, warned that extreme heat could lead to serious medical problems like sunstroke, exhaustion and dehydration.

The public should avoid prolonged exposure to direct sunlight between 11 am and 3 pm, it said. People have been advised to stay hydrated by drinking sufficient water even if they do not feel thirsty, and to avoid alcohol, coffee, tea, and carbonated drinks as that can cause dehydration.

Wearing loose, light-coloured cotton clothing and using like umbrellas, hats, and footwear while going outdoors have also been recommended. — *PTI*

DELHI AND DEHRADUN GET A NEW LIFELINE

Prime Minister Modi inaugurated on Tuesday the Delhi-Baghpat-Saharanpur-Dehradun Corridor.

The 213-km six-lane access-controlled corridor passes through Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand.

Cost: ₹12,000 crore

The expressway's 12km elevated wildlife corridor is hailed as Asia's longest. It has 6 animal underpasses, 8 animal passes, 2 elephant underpasses.

The journey between Delhi and Dehradun, which now takes over 6 hours, will be cut down to just 2.5 hours.

Bank accounts of TCS sex harassment suspects checked

NASHIK, 13 APRIL

Bank accounts of the accused arrested in connection with the sexual harassment and forced religious conversion case involving some women employees of TCS's Nashik centre are being investigated to determine the source of funds. A court had extended the custody of the female operations manager of TCS until 15 April.

Seven employees of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), including six men and a woman, have been arrested so far. Another female employee is absconding. The police set up a SIT to probe the complaints lodged by eight female employees, who claimed that senior colleagues mentally and sexually harassed them.

The arrested staffers, who have since been suspended, are Danish Sheikh, Tausif Attar, Raza Memon, Shahrukh Qureshi, Shafi Sheikh, Asif Aftab Ansari, and the female operations manager. — *PTI*

2 STUDENTS DIE AFTER DRUG USE AT CONCERT

MUMBAI, 14 APRIL

Two students died and another is critical after consuming drugs at a music concert in Mumbai, police said on Tuesday. Five persons have been arrested in connection with the incident, including PG students and an event organiser.

The dead are a 24-year-old male and a 24-year-old female, who had attended the concert at the Nesco Exhibition Centre in Goregaon East.

Police said three students from the group consumed

drugs during the event, and their condition deteriorated soon. They were subsequently rushed to hospitals.

Two women were initially taken to a nearby hospital and later shifted to an advanced facility as their condition worsened. The male student was admitted to a private hospital in Goregaon, where he died.

One of the two women succumbed on Monday due to complications arising from the drug overdose, while the third student remains in ICU. The Mumbai police registered a case under the BNS and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Five suspects have been arrested and are in police custody. Investigators are questioning them to determine the nature and source of the drugs. — *Agencies*

Two held for assaulting brigadier, son in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Delhi Police apprehended two men in connection with the assault on a brigadier and his son at Mehram Nagar here, an official said.

The arrested men are Satender alias Sonu, 49, a resident of Mehram Nagar who is the director of a private aviation firm dealing in charter and cargo flight services and aircraft trading, and Sanjay Sharma, 56, who runs an eatery in the same area.

The brigadier and his IIT graduate son were allegedly assaulted, and his wife threatened, by some men after the officer objected to two people consuming alcohol inside a car outside their house on Monday. Police said Satender and Sanjay Sharma were in the car. The Mercedes car has also been seized.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh directed the Delhi police to provide security to the brigadier and his family. — *PTI*

Elephant Omkar returns to Goa, damages crops

PERNEM, 14 APRIL

Farmers in the Pernem taluka of North Goa are having sleepless nights as a 10-year-old elephant, Omkar, back after a brief absence, is on a rampage, destroying their crops and vehicles.

The jumbo has been foraging in cashew plantations in Mopa and surrounding villages along the Goa-Maharashtra border, a Forest official said, adding that a 25-member team was tracking its movements.

Separated from its herd, Omkar crossed into Goa from Sindhudurg in September 2025. After attacking crops for some time, it reunited with the herd, but resurfaced in North Goa in March. With the paddy fields ready for harvesting, farmers fear that Omkar might destroy their crop within a few hours.

Since Mopa village is home to Manohar International Airport, drones cannot be used as the area is a no-fly zone. Omkar was also linked to a human death in Maharashtra. — PTI

FAULTY LIFESTYLE

Fertility issues now affecting women in 20s, say experts

- Studies published in journals like 'The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health' have documented a steady decline in the age of puberty onset in women over the last few decades, due to improved nutrition, increasing obesity and exposure to various environmental factors

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

A growing number of young women are experiencing hormonal imbalance and fertility-related issues much earlier, with experts attributing the trend to a combination of biological shifts and modern lifestyle.

Doctors say there is a noticeable change in clinical patterns, with conditions once common in women in their late 30s now increasingly being diagnosed in those in their 20s.

"There is a clear shift in women's health today, where issues related to hormonal imbalance and fertility are appearing much earlier than we have observed," Priti Arora Dhamija, senior consultant and head of Invitro Fertilization and gynaecology at the Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research, said.

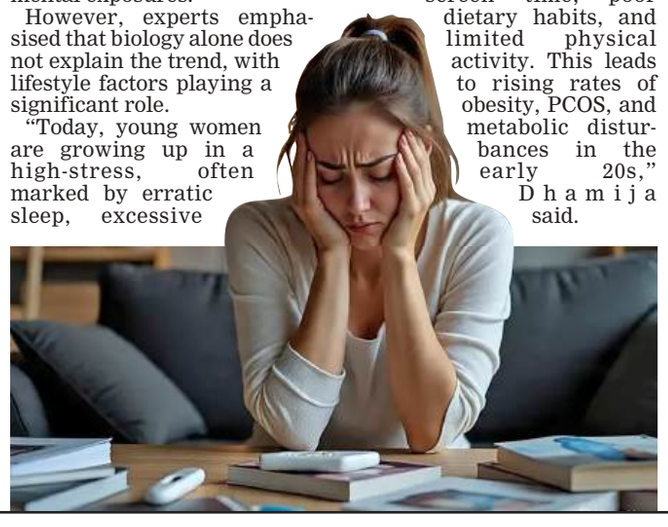
She noted that one contributing factor is the earlier onset of puberty.

"One of the key reasons is early puberty with many girls now attain menarche as early as 8 to 9 years, which can lead to an earlier decline in ovarian reserve," she said.

Studies published in journals like 'The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health' have documented a steady decline in the age of puberty onset over the past few decades, linked to improved nutrition, rising obesity and environmental exposures.

However, experts emphasised that biology alone does not explain the trend, with lifestyle factors playing a significant role.

"Today, young women are growing up in a high-stress, often marked by erratic sleep, excessive screen time, poor dietary habits, and limited physical activity. This leads to rising rates of obesity, PCOS, and metabolic disturbances in the early 20s," Dhamija said.



Chronic stress, she added, disrupts the hypothalamic pituitary ovarian axis, leading to hormonal imbalance and irregular ovulation in young women.

"In addition, behavioural factors such like sexual activity, multiple partners, and lack of medical supervision in contraceptive use are contributing to higher incidences of sexually transmitted infections and uterine health issues, which can impact fertility. Exposure to hormone-like substances through food and pollution is also a concern," she said.

Juhi Bharti, Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at AIIMS, Delhi, said clinicians are increasingly observing diminished ovarian reserve in younger women. — *PTI*

SANKRANTI RUSH

Hundreds throng the banks of the River Ganga on Mesha Sankranti at Har Ki Pauri in Haridwar, Uttarakhand. Mesha Sankranti marks the first day of the solar New Year in the Hindu calendar, signifying a change in season and nature —*PTI*

Women's groups flag 'haste' over quota, delimitation

A petition has been signed by 488 activists from across 95 cities and districts —*PTI*

Women's groups, activists and civil society members have voiced strong concerns over the manner in which the government is proceeding with proposed legislation on women's reservation and delimitation, to be taken up in Parliament later this week.

They reiterated, however, their support for the principle of quotas for women in legislatures.

In an open letter addressed to MPs, a collective of women's organisations and individuals criticised what they described as a "hurried move" to convene a session amid ongoing state elections and the Model Code of Conduct.

"We deplore the hurried move to call this joint session of Parliament when several state elections are ongoing," the letter said, adding that there had been a "failure of the government to give adequate time for women's groups to place their recommendations".

The petition has been signed by 488 activists from across 95 cities and districts. Prominent signatories include Ammu Joseph, Anjana Prakash, Kalpana Kannabiran, Romila Thapar, Nandini Sundar, Urvashi Butalia and Yogendra Yadav, among others.

The signatories argued that the session can still achieve "some positive results" if its focus is limited to "necessary amendments" to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. They suggested an amendment to the law to remove all references linking women's reservation to census findings and delimitation.

"At a flat 33 per cent of all seats, women's reservation is not linked to population counts or legislatures' expansion, it can be applied to the current or any strength of the legislatures. The breakup of these 33 per cent state-wise can be according to the states' seat shares and revised following every legislature expansion," it said.

They also expressed concerns over the role of the Election Commission in identifying reserved seats, citing "grave doubts of the impartiality" of the institution, and proposed that the process be handled by Special State Committees comprising representatives of election bodies, political parties and independent candidates, with at least one-third women members.

While supporting the early implementation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, the petition stressed that issues such as the proposed expansion of Lok Sabha and state assembly seats required "in-depth discussion" and should be taken up separately. It also called for additional measures, including state funding for election campaigns of marginalised women and a separate constitutional amendment to extend reservation to the Rajya Sabha.

In a separate statement, endorsed by a wide group of activists, academics and former civil servants, concerns were raised over what was termed a "complete lack of transparency" surrounding the draft legislation expected to be introduced during the session.

"We are writing to express our deep concern about the complete lack of transparency regarding the draft legislations proposed to be taken up," the statement said, noting that information about the bills was reaching the public only through media reports based on unnamed sources.

Among those endorsing the statement are Anjali Bhardwaj, Jayati Ghosh, Zoya Hasan, Annie Raja, Nivedita Menon, K Sujatha Rao, Harsh Mander, Nikhil Dey, Teesta Setalvad and Yamini Aiyar.

The signatories pointed out that the proposed laws could significantly reshape India's electoral system, including a reported 50 per cent increase in seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. "The laws will fundamentally reshape India's electoral democracy and impact every voter in the country," the statement said.

Calling the process a violation of established norms, the statement said the government had failed to adhere to Pre-legislative Consultation Policy, which mandates placing draft laws in the public domain for feedback before Cabinet approval. It described the situation as a "flagrant violation of peoples' fundamental right to information".

While expressing unequivocal support for women's reservation, the signatories criticised the manner in which the reforms were being introduced. "It is a profound irony to introduce legislation for women's empowerment while simultaneously excluding women from the conversation," it said, adding that such a "historic" reform required "transparent debate, public scrutiny and the inclusion of diverse voices".

The Union Cabinet has cleared draft bills to operationalise the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam ahead of the 2029 Lok Sabha elections. The proposed changes include increasing the Lok Sabha's strength from 543 to 816 seats, with 273 seats reserved for women. The legislative package is expected to include a Constitution amendment bill to modify provisions of the Act, alongside amendments to the Delimitation Act to enable redrawing of constituencies in line with the expanded House strength.

Another bill is likely to extend the implementation of the reservation framework to Union territories with legislatures. —*PTI*

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SALAR سالار

2025 Jafrabad violence to shape WB poll results

The iron gate is new. So are the CCTV cameras tied to electric poles outside the two-storey house at the edge of Jafrabad in West Bengal. But the fear is old.

A year after the arson during the protests over the Waqf law in Murshidabad, the house of Harogobindo Das and his son Chandan, who were killed by a mob, still looks like a bunker.

The walls have black marks. Broken bricks lie near the staircase. A central police camp stands a few feet away. Yet inside the house, nobody speaks of safety.

In Jafrabad, a Hindu-majority hamlet surrounded by Muslim-dominated neighbourhoods in Samserganj, last year's violence has stopped being merely a memory. It has become a political language before the 2026 assembly elections.

The names of Harogobindo and Chandan are now spoken here the way Bengal once spoke of Nandigram or Sandeshkhali - not only as a tragedy, but also as a warning, a slogan and an accusation.

"We are being remembered because votes are coming," said Parul Das, widow of Harogobindo and mother of Chandan, sitting at the entrance of the house, where the mob had entered on 12 April last year.

"They dragged my husband and son out and killed them like animals. My husband and son had done nothing. I called the police, the MLA, everyone. Nobody came," she told PTI.

"What will I do with the money? Can money bring them back? The TMC government cannot give us justice. Suvendu Adhikari came here. Nobody else stood beside us," she said.

Her vote, she said, is no longer about roads, ration or Lakshmir Bhandar.

Upstairs, Chandan's sister-in-law Sathi Das still does not sleep alone.

That afternoon, she said, she heard shouting from the lane and then the sound of bombs.

"I was with my children. My mother-in-law screamed that they had entered the house. We ran to the terrace. Later, we escaped through another side. My husband was in Coimbatore, and my brother-in-law and father-in-law were taken away. We could not save them," she said.

Her husband Samartha had been working in Coimbatore when Chandan called him.

Samartha has now returned to Jafrabad for good, as he doesn't want to leave his family alone.

In December, a court sentenced 13 men to life imprisonment in the case. But the family said the verdict has not ended their fear.

Across Jafrabad, fear hangs like humidity. Several houses remain locked. Some families have sent daughters to relatives in Malda and Birbhum. Children stop playing after dark. Women do not step out alone at night.

70-year-old Bharat Das said villagers had tried to resist when the mob entered. The village, he said, no longer trusts its own geography.

In Samserganj, where Muslims make up nearly 80 per cent of the electorate, Jafrabad is a small island of Hindu votes.

During the Special Intensive Revision, nearly 92,000 names were deleted from the constituency rolls, mostly Muslims, bringing the electorate down sharply.

The BJP said the correction has exposed what it called years of demographic change. The TMC termed it disenfranchisement.

The politics of Jafrabad now sits squarely on that faultline. BJP candidate Shashti Charan Das said the killings of Harogobindo and Chandan prove that Hindus are unsafe under the TMC rule.

TMC candidate Noor Alam accuses the BJP of turning a family's grief into an election campaign.

Congress candidate Nazme Alam said both the TMC and BJP are feeding off fear.

Yet in Jafrabad, politics returns again and again to the same staircase, the same broken courtyard, the same house with the iron gate.

That is why Jafrabad has become larger than itself.

In a constituency where the TMC has won comfortably since 2016 and Amirul Islam has been replaced this year by Noor Alam, and where the Congress still retains old pockets of influence, the election is no longer being argued through roads, jobs or development.

Here, people speak who came after the killings, who answered the phone, who crossed the lane and who did not.

The village has become Bengal in miniature: grief converted into politics, fear recast as identity, and an election reduced to a single, burning question -who will protect us when the forces leave?

Amid the BJP's cry of Hindu insecurity, the TMC's charge of polarisation and the Congress warning against both, Jafrabad now stands where Bengal's deepest faultlines meet.

When Samserganj votes on 23 April in the first phase of the West Bengal assembly polls, Jafrabad will not be choosing merely between parties or candidates. It will be voting with the memory of a broken door, bodies lying outside the house, unanswered phone calls and the fear that the next knock may again come with bombs and guns. —*PTI*

Across Jafrabad, fear hangs like humidity. Several houses remain locked, some families have sent daughters to relatives in Malda and Birbhum. Children and women do not step out alone at night —*PTI*

From Ramayana to world's most polluted city: UP's Loni gets new name

Remembered in mythology as the place where Lakshmana cut off the nose of Shoorpankha, Loni, a town on the outskirts of Delhi, now has a new identity — the world's most polluted city.

IQAir's 2025 World Air Quality Report, which analysed data from over 9,400 cities across 143 countries, found Loni recording an annual average PM2.5 concentration of 112.5 micrograms per cubic metre, which is more than 22 times the WHO-recommended safe limit.

On paper, it is an alarming number, but on the ground, it is business as usual in Loni. As one enters the city on a single road, the traffic begins to crawl. Old buildings and shops line both sides of the road, their facades darkened by time and dust.

Brick kilns, dyeing and metal processing units, unauthorised industrial clusters running on dirty fuels, rampant burning of toxic e-waste — the pollution levels keep hitting alarming levels, leaving the residents gasping for breath as a toxic, harmful and suffocating concoction of gases and smell goes straight to the lungs of the over seven lakh people who live there.

Adding to that, the heavy flow of diesel trucks using Loni as a transit corridor between Delhi and western Uttar Pradesh, dense clouds of dust that rise due to ongoing construction in and around the region and the regular burning of waste, including plastics.

Worsening the woes is the relentless stream of emissions from the massive number of vehicles going in and out of Loni on a daily basis.

Mahendar, 62, who has been living in Loni for over four decades, says the e-waste from bordering areas of UP and also the national capital is dumped in Loni and burnt at night.

"It gets impossible to breathe on some nights because there is unchecked burning of e-waste. We have raised several complaints, but nothing happens. The fumes are toxic and during the day, the dust from vehicles, as well as trucks carrying sand, keeps the air hazy... coughing is not seasonal here, it is a year-round thing," he told PTI.

When this PTI reporter visited parts of Loni, the remains of e-waste could be seen dumped on the roadside with heaps of garbage containing plastic waste here and there.

Bobby Tyagi, who does farming in the area, said the government only wants to crack down on stubble burning, but there are so many other sources of pollution which are even more hazardous.

Stray cattle forage amid garbage dumped along a roadside in Loni area of Ghaziabad —*PTI*

"The crops are impacted, the water quality is worse, but whenever the pollution issue is raised, the farmers are penalised, and the action is limited to just hue and cry over stubble burning. My children have moved to other cities because in the last five years, living here has become unbearable," he said.

People on roads with covered faces are a common sight, as is garbage and dust.

"The air purifiers cannot be of any help here as the filters have to be changed every two months. Only a few houses have them. Nobody uses balconies or terraces here as the burning smell and dust make it difficult," said 24-year-old Trishna, who is studying architecture at a Delhi college and commutes daily.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said it is unfortunate that Uttar Pradesh's Loni has been reduced to being the world's most polluted city.

He said Loni near Ghaziabad is steeped in Indian mythology as well as history.

"It has many important places of worship reflecting India's composite culture. It figures in the Ramayana as well. There are also some lovely gardens and orchards there," Ramesh said.

Loni sits in the Indo-Gangetic Plain. According to local tradition and mythological accounts, Loni was the seat of the demon king Lavanasura (or Lavana), who was a contemporary of Lord Rama.

It is also believed to be the historical site where Lord Rama's brother, Lakshmana, chopped off the nose of the demoness Surpanakha.

The former environment minister stressed that the National Clean Air Program needs a complete revamp to focus sharply on the reduction of PM2.5 levels, which has become a severe public health disaster across the country.

The UP Pollution Control Board (UPCB) has formed monitoring teams to crack down on illegal and polluting industries.

Vipul Kumar, Assistant Environment Engineer, Regional Office, UPCB, told PTI that over 120 illegal industries operating in the area have been sealed since March. —*PTI*

Pak issues notice to TV channel showing Bhosle

LAHORE, 14 APRIL

Pakistan's media watchdog has issued a show-cause notice to a leading news channel for running "Indian content" while broadcasting the news about the death of legendary singer Asha Bhosle. A ban on Indian content in Pakistan has been in place since 2018. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) issued the notice to GeoNews on Monday seeking an explanation as to why it aired Indian content along with the news. Bhosle passed away on Sunday due to multi-organ failure. She was 92. "It has always been customary to revisit and celebrate the work of iconic artists when reporting on them," Azhar Abbas said. He added, "art, like knowledge, is a shared heritage of humanity." —*PTI*

Baloch Liberation Army claims 1st maritime strike

BALOCHISTAN, 14 APRIL

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) stated on Monday that it has set up a naval wing and released visuals of what it claimed to be its first maritime operation in the Jiwani region of Gwadar. The group said it created the "Hammal Maritime Defence Force (HMDF)" as its naval division. Spokesperson Jeeyand Baloch said fighters targeted a patrolling vessel of the Pakistani Navy, claiming three personnel were killed. "After carrying out operations on land, this move into maritime boundaries represents a significant and strategic shift," the statement said. The group added that its fighters "successfully returned to their secure hideouts" and declared readiness to target forces "everywhere" in future operations. —*ANI*

Gunman wounds 16 in Turkish school before suicide

ANKARA, 14 APRIL

A former student opened fire at a high school in southeast Turkey on Tuesday, wounding at least 16 people before killing himself, an official said. The 18-year-old attacker, armed with a shotgun, fired randomly at a vocational high school in Siverek, Sanliurfa province, before hiding inside the building. "The individual was cornered inside the building through police intervention and died after shooting himself," Governor Hasan Sildak said. Most victims were treated locally, while several were transferred due to serious conditions. The motive for the attack is unclear. —*PTI*

— WIKIPEDIA

Weinstein faces retrial in New York rape case

NEW YORK, 14 APRIL

Harvey Weinstein is again going on trial on a rape charge in New York City, with jury selection expected to begin Tuesday. Jurors will weigh whether he raped Jessica Mann in a Manhattan hotel in 2013. "It's not going to be a mirror image of the last trial," lawyer Marc Agnifilo said. Weinstein denies all accusations, stating he "acted wrongly, but I never assaulted anyone." The retrial focuses on a single charge rather than multiple allegations heard previously. Mann testified that she protested during the encounter but "just gave up." Defence lawyers argue all interactions were consensual. Weinstein, already convicted in another case, faces further legal scrutiny as proceedings continue. —*PTI*

US-Iran may meet again in Pak for talks

Chinese ship passes through US' blockade on Hormuz

ISLAMABAD, 14 APRIL

Pakistan is engaged in high-level contacts to bring Iran and the US back to the negotiating table and the two sides may meet again in Islamabad for a second round of talks by next week, according to a media report on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Field Marshal Asim Munir are making efforts to ensure the second round of talks, before the two-week ceasefire ends on 21 April, the Express Tribune reported.

The talks over the weekend collapsed after a lengthy effort in Islamabad. Reports suggested that the US delegation, led by **Vice President JD Vance** sought a 20-year restriction on Iran's nuclear enrichment programme, while Tehran only agreed to five years. The Iranian delegation was led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf and included **Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.**

As Pakistani officials said that they're reaching out to Washington and Tehran, US President Donald Trump said on Monday "we've been called by the other side" and "they want to work a deal."

Meanwhile, a US sanctioned tanker passed the Strait of Hormus amid Washington's blockade.

The Rich Starry, a chemical and oil tanker, had been waiting off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, according to shipping data firm Lloyd's List.

The US said on Monday that the blockade applied only to vessels travelling to or from Iranian ports, and it was not immediately clear whether the Rich Starry had docked in Iran or had Iranian oil.

Notably, analytics firm Kpler said that the ship was a Chinese-linked vessel.

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron said he and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will chair a conference in Paris on Friday seeking to restore freedom of navigation in the Strait.

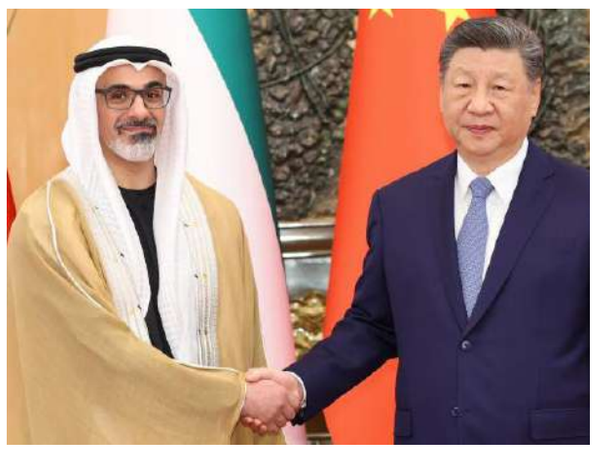
WEST ASIA WAR DAY-46

Photographs of people killed by Israeli-US strikes were placed outside the damaged sites in Tehran, Iran —*PRESS TV*

IMF LOWERS GROWTH

International Monetary Fund downgraded its forecast for global growth to 3.1 per cent in 2026, an expected deceleration from last year's 3.4 per cent expansion due to the war.

The IMF marked up its expectation for global inflation to 4.4 per cent from 4.1 per cent in 2025. Massive investment in data centres and artificial intelligence, strengthened economic numbers, but the war has halted this. —*PTI*



Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan meets Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing —*XINHUA*

China puts forth 4-point plan for PEACE

BEIJING, 14 APRIL

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday put forth a four-point proposal on promoting peace and stability in West Asia during a meeting with Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.

THE FOUR POINTS ARE:

1. Adherence to the principle of peaceful coexistence
2. Adherence to the principle of national sovereignty
3. Adherence to the principle of international rule of law
4. Coordination of development and security

The rule of law cannot be "used when convenient and discarded when not", Xi told Crown the Prince, according to state-run Xinhua news agency. The UAE and China also agreed to deepen their cooperation.

Notably, China has generally aligned itself with Iran, but it is also looking to balance its relations with Gulf states, who may be disenfranchised with the US.

CHINA, SPAIN TO SAFEGUARD MULTILATERALISM

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and Xi said that Beijing and Madrid must safeguard multilateralism.

Both countries can "can contribute to finding solutions to the various trade tensions that exist," Sanchez told Xi.

Sanchez said that China was the only global player that could help end wars in Iran and places like Ukraine. He said Spain wanted to avoid granting impunity for the those who committed "genocide" in Gaza.

Sanchez is looking to deepen trade ties with China.

Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov arrived in China on Tuesday on an official visit. —*AGENCIES*

Hezbollah rejects Israel-Lebanon ceasefire talks in the US

BEIRUT, 14 APRIL

Excavators search for people burried under rubble after Israel's devastating airstrikes on Beirut last Wednesday —*PTI*

Lebanon's Hezbollah said it will not abide by any potential agreements made during the direct Lebanon-Israel talks in the US later on Tuesday.

Wafiq Safa, a high-ranking member of Hezbollah's political council, told press that Hezbollah is "not bound by what" Israel and Lebanon agree to. "We are not concerned with... the negotiations at all".

Earlier, Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem urged the Lebanese government to not participate in the talks.

Notably, the upcoming negations is the first time in decades that Lebanon and Israel, which do not have diplomatic relations with each other, will be holding direct talks. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is reportedly set to join the negotiations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that the objectives of the talks is the disarmament of Hezbollah, while Lebanon hopes to broker a ceasefire. However, Israeli officials have said that there won't be a ceasefire with Hezbollah. Qassem said that when the Israeli objectives were so clear, there was no point in negotiating.

> **Europe has forgotten so many things since the Holocaust. Europe can learn many things from us, and above all — the most important thing: the sharp distinction between good and evil. Europe which swore after the World War to defend good, is now tainted by a deep moral weakness.**
>
> —Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel PM

Notably, the talks come after Israel's strikes on Beirut on Wednesday killed at least 350 people, all of whom were civilians, said Safa.

Ties between Hezbollah, which is also a political party, and the Lebanese government has fractured, after the government insisted on the group's disarmament. —*PTI*

Apple Maps deleting towns in south Lebanon?

Social media users alleged that Apple Maps was removing the names of towns in southern Lebanon amid Israel's invasion.

Users noted that the app displays no visible place names across much of southern Lebanon, apart from the city of Tyre, which has a population of around 2,00,000. By contrast, nearby areas in northern Israel — including Nahariyya, Shelomi, and Beit Jan — as well as small Syrian villages along the border, are clearly labelled.

Apple Maps, however refuted the allegations. Instead, it claimed that the places never featured on its map to begin with.

However, users were quick to allege that Apple Maps and Google Maps had also removed the names of places in Gaza during Israel's onslaught. —*AGENCIES*

Pope visits Algeria seeking Christian-Muslim unity

ALGIERS, 14 APRIL

Pope Leo XIV is following in the footsteps of his spiritual father, St Augustine, making a pilgrimage to the archaeological ruins of eastern Algeria on Tuesday, where the fifth century titan of early Christianity lived, died and wrote some of the most important works in Western thought.

Leo is looking press a message of peace and Christian-Muslim coexistence, and is channelling the North African Augustine as a bridge-builder. Augustine wrote some of the most important works of Christianity.

His visit also comes amid a feud with US President Donald Trump. Leo has called for peace and said that God does not bless war, while Trump has called him "weak on crime" and "terrible for foreign policy". The Pope responded by saying he is "not afraid" of the US.

Vice President JD Vance chirped in on Tuesday, saying that he hoped the Pope would "stick to matters of morality" and let the President focus on policy. —*PTI*

IS THAT EPSTEIN? IRAN ON TRUMP'S JESUS PHOTO

The Iranian Embassy in South Africa asked if the AI-generated photo Trump posted where he was healing man was late convicted sex-offender Jeffrey Epstein. Trump has since deleted the photo where he appeared to be healing someone – who allegedly bears resemblance to Epstein – with divine powers. Trump said he thought the photo showed him as a doctor or a "Red Cross" worker, while others thought he was comparing himself to Jesus Christ amid a war of words with the Pope.

IRAN SEEKS REPARATIONS FROM 5 ARAB STATES

TEHRAN, 14 APRIL

Iran called for reparations from five Arab countries, saying the enabled US-Israeli attacks by allowing territories to be used for attacks against the Tehran.

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative Amir-Saeid Iravani said Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Jordan cannot claim the right to self defence, in a letter addressed to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Security Council President Jamal Fares Alrowaiei, according to state-media Press TV.

Instead, Iran is the "victim of aggression", and said that the five countries were complicit in attacks on "civilian targets inside Iran". Hence, the five countries should provide "compensation for all material and moral damage sustained as a result of their internationally wrongful acts."

Iravani also said that the US' blockade on the Strait of Hormuz violated international maritime law. —*ANI*

Israeli strikes kill 4 in Gaza

Israel killed at least four Palestinians in separate strikes on Gaza on Monday, Gaza's Health Ministry reported on Tuesday. One stroke outside a school resulted in the three of the fatalities, while at least 11 others were injured. More than 750 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the October ceasefire last year.

Iran quotes SRK on blockade

The Iranian Embassy in Mumbai responded to the US blockade of the Strait of Hormuz by quoting an iconic Shah Rukh Khan line. It mocked Trump for claiming that Iran's Navy was destroyed and said that he will soon see what happens: "Abhi toh sirf trailer hai, picture abhi baaki hai (This is just the trailer; the movie is yet to come)."

Canadian PM secures majority in spl election

TORONTO, 14 APRIL

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has secured a majority government following a series of special elections, enabling his Liberals to pass legislation without opposition support. Voters elected three vacant seats of Canada's 343 districts, with Danielle Martin winning in Toronto's University Rosedale and Doly Begum in Scarborough Southwest. Results for a Quebec seat are expected later.

Carney, who won last year's election amid public concern over US President Donald Trump's annexation threats, has pledged to reduce Canada's US reliance. Since then, five opposition defections, including four from the Conservatives, have moved the Liberals closer to a majority. A defector cited Carney's speech at the World Economic Forum, condemning economic coercion, as influential.

Former Bank of England head and central banker Carney, who shifted the Liberals to centre-right, congratulated Martin and Begum via social media but did not comment on the majority win. —*PTI*

'TALIBAN CUT THE PIPES'

Water crisis grips Kabul

KABUL, 14 APRIL

Rapid urbanisation, excess extraction of underground water, pending dam projects due to shortage of funds and dwindling water sources have brought Afghanistan capital Kabul on the threshold of a severe water crisis.

People have to travel long distances with empty containers to fetch water. In many places the Taliban government has cut waterpipe lines to ensure there is no further drop in well's water for the people living higher up the hill with no water at all, residents allege.

Kabul's population relies mostly on groundwater extracted from wells. But the groundwater has been receding at an alarming rate, and some wells have to be dug as deep as 150 metres (nearly 500 feet) to reach it.

An April 2025 report by the aid group Mercy Corps said the level of Kabul's aquifers had plunged by about 80-100 feet over the past decade.

The changing climate has only compounded the growing crisis as shallow aquifers have also already run dry, said Najibullah Sadid, a Germany-based environment expert with the Afghanistan Water and Environment Professionals Network.

He said the Taliban had imposed restrictions on groundwater extraction by beverage companies, farmers and other commercial users.

The pending 200km pipeline project from the Panjshir River north of Kabul, and the proposed dam and reservoir known as the Shah Toot Dam about 30km southwest of the city have run into delays due to lack of funds. They could provide water for 4 million people, the report said. —*PTI*

A man loads jerrycans onto a donkey after collecting water from a well at a mosque in Deh Mazang, Kabul, on Thursday —*PTI*

Evergrande Group head pleads guilty in China mkt crash case

BEIJING, 14 APRIL

Xu Jiayin, founder of Evergrande Group, has pleaded guilty to multiple fraud-related charges in a high-profile case tied to China's property market crisis.

The Shenzhen Intermediate People's Court said Xu admitted to offences including embezzlement, corporate bribery, illegal fundraising, and unlawful loan issuance. Prosecutors also accused Evergrande and its real estate arm of fraudulent securities issuance and illegal absorption of public deposits. The verdict will be delivered at a later date.

Evergrande, once the world's largest property developer by sales, accumulated liabilities of about USD 332 billion, making it the most indebted developer globally. Its collapse triggered a severe downturn in China's real estate sector.

The crisis deepened after regulatory tightening under the "three red lines" policy aimed at reducing developer debt. In 2024, a Hong Kong court ordered Evergrande's liquidation. —*PTI*

India auto sales surge 10.4% in FY26: SIAM

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Automobile wholesales in India posted a record at 2,82,65,519 units in FY26, up 10.4 per cent year-on-year with all segments recording the highest-ever sales in a fiscal, with GST 2.0 proving to be a key growth driver, Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said on Tuesday. In FY 2025-26, passenger vehicles posted wholesales of 46,43,439. Two-wheeler wholesales in FY26 were at 2,17,05,974 units as against 1,96,07,332 units in FY25, up 10.7 per cent. Motorcycle sales were up 6.6 per cent at 1,30,64,789 units in FY26, SIAM said. Scooter sales were up 18.5 per cent at 81,17,945 units, it added. The commercial vehicles segment posted sales of 10,79,871 units in FY26, registering a growth of 12.6 per cent. —*PTI*

Poonawalla Fincorp raises Rs 2,500 cr via QIP

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Poonawalla Fincorp on Tuesday said it has raised Rs 2,500 crore through a Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP) to support business growth, expand lending operations and diversify its asset portfolio. The QIP issue witnessed strong participation from institutional investors and long-term funds, reflecting continued confidence in the company's strategy and growth outlook, Poonawalla Fincorp. Under the issue, the company allotted 6,74,30,883 equity shares of face value of Rs 2 each to Qualified Institutional Buyers at an issue price of Rs 370.75 per share. The issue price was at a 5 per cent discount to the floor price of Rs 390.26 per share, aggregating to the total proceeds of Rs 2,500 crore. —*PTI*

India's hospitality sector to add 70K rooms by 2030

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

India's hotel industry is projected to add over 70,000 keys by 2030, with the market size reaching USD 31 billion by 2029, according to CBRE. In 2025, investment surged, with deal value hitting USD 456 million, a 2.5-fold increase from 2024. The sector is moving from recovery to structural maturity, supported by rising domestic tourism, which grew 40 per cent YoY to 4.1 billion visits in 2025. Anshuman Magazine of CBRE said, "The hospitality sector's trajectory is a testament to India's economic resilience, supported by rising incomes and infrastructure development." Despite geopolitical tensions, occupancy levels reached 64 per cent, with RevPAR up 11 per cent YoY. Growth is driven by premium offerings and institutional investment, with moves towards asset-light expansion models. —*PTI*

Petrol, diesel losses widen amid fuel price freeze

Petrol losses increases to ₹18 per litre, while diesel is ₹35

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Losses on petrol have widened to Rs 18 per litre and to Rs 35 on diesel as state-owned fuel retailers continue to keep pump prices frozen despite a sharp rise in input costs, sources said.

Despite prices being deregulated more than a decade back, state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) have not changed the retail petrol and diesel price since April 2022. Global crude oil prices have seen sharp fluctuations over this period.

The three firms were incurring losses of about Rs 2,400 crore per day at the peak last month, which have since narrowed to around Rs 1,600 crore daily after the government cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 10 per litre each — a reduction that was not passed on to consumers but used to partly offset losses, industry sources said.

The losses in March have wiped away all gains they made in January/February, they said, adding the three firms are most likely to post losses in the January-March quarter.

India, which imported about 88 per cent of its crude oil requirement in 2025, remains highly exposed to global price swings. Around 45 per cent of imports came from the Middle East, 35 per cent from Russia and 6 per cent from the US.

While the government cut excise duty on fuels by Rs 10 per litre in March, central levies have been on a declining trend and now stand at Rs 11.9 per litre on petrol and Rs 7.8 per litre on diesel.

Even a complete removal of excise duties would not fully offset OMC losses at current prices, the report noted.

State-level VAT rates, however, have largely remained stable. —*PTI*

India's strong fundamentals may cushion oil shock: S&P

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

—AI

India's robust macroeconomic and financial sector fundamentals are likely to cushion the impact of a sustained oil price shock, though economic growth could slow by up to 80 basis points if crude averages $130 per barrel in 2026, according to S&P Global Ratings.

Under its stress scenario, corporate earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) could decline 15-25 per cent in FY27, with leverage rising by 0.5x-1x, while banking sector asset quality may weaken, pushing bad loans to around 3.5 per cent.

"India isn't immune to the shocks reverberating from the Middle East war. The pain of higher energy prices and supply disruptions may persist for months, crimping economic activity across households, corporations, and banks," S&P said in a report.

S&P Global Ratings assumes Brent crude at $130 per barrel in 2026 and $100 in 2027 under the stress case, versus a base case of $85 and $70, respectively.

Higher oil prices could widen the current account deficit, with estimates suggesting a $10 per barrel increase may expand the gap by about 0.4 percentage points of GDP. The rupee could also face depreciation pressures amid risk-off sentiment and a rising import bill. —*PTI*

Gold ETFs attract ₹31,561 cr in March

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) witnessed an influx of Rs 31,561 crore in the March 2026 quarter as investors sought the safety of the traditional safe-haven asset amid heightened geopolitical tensions.

On a quarter-on-quarter basis, inflows rose 36 per cent to Rs 23,132 crore. The asset base of gold ETFs, as well as investor accounts, recorded significant growth during the year.

In March alone, the category saw net inflows of Rs 2,266 crore, lower than Rs 5,255 crore in February and Rs 24,040 crore in January, according to data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi).

While the pace of inflows has moderated sequentially, investor interest in gold-backed products remained positive. The slower inflows in March likely reflect a combination of normalisation after a very strong start to the year and some moderation in fresh allocations.

Umesh Sharma, CIO-Debt, The Wealth Company Mutual Fund, said inflows into gold ETFs moderated in March, lower than levels seen in previous months, likely as relative valuations turned more favourable towards equities compared with gold.

The strong inflows helped in driving the assets under management (AUM) of gold funds nearly three-fold to Rs 1.71 lakh crore by the end of March 2026, from Rs 58,888 crore a year earlier.

Folio numbers in gold ETFs increased by 54.28 lakh to 1.24 crore in March 2026 from 69.69 lakh in March 2025. —*PTI*

TOP AMONG INDIAN FIRMS

Adani Green gets highest ESG score of 87.3%

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL) has received a CareEdge-ESG 1+ rating with a score of 87.3 from CARE ESG Ratings Limited (CareEdge-ESG), a Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) registered environmental, social and governance (ESG) rating provider.

The score places AGEL at the top among all Indian companies assessed by CareEdge-ESG.

The rating reflects AGEL's leadership in integrating sustainability across its operations as a large utility-scale renewable energy developer.

The assessment highlights strong performance across climate risk management, water stewardship, waste management, biodiversity conservation and governance practices, supported by transparent disclosures and structured oversight mechanisms.

The rating underscores AGEL's structured approach to managing environmental and social risks through well-defined policies, management systems and enterprise-wide integration of ESG considerations.

The recognition reflects a definite shift within the Adani Group towards embedding sustainability across its infrastructure-led portfolio, including renewable energy, ports, logistics and utilities.

The CareEdge-ESG rating also enhances AGEL's positioning with investors and lenders, particularly in a capital environment where sustainability performance is increasingly linked to access to financing.

The rating is expected to support the company's ability to mobilise sustainable and transition-linked capital for large-scale renewable energy projects.

Ashish Khanna, Chief Executive Officer of Adani Green Energy Limited, said, "… This recognition validates our disciplined approach to ESG governance, proactive climate-risk management, and long-term value creation for all stakeholders." —*PTI*

> ● The CareEdge-ESG rating also enhances AGEL's positioning with investors and lenders, particularly in a capital environment where sustainability performance is increasingly linked to access to financing.

Centre revises pricing norms for low-grade iron ore

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The government announced amendments to rules on low-grade iron ore pricing, aiming to curb wastage and improve resource utilisation for a steady steel supply.

The Minerals (Other than Atomic and Hydro Carbons Energy Minerals) Concession (Third Amendment) Rules, 2026, issued on 10 April, establish a framework for setting the average sale price (ASP) of iron ore below the threshold of 45 per cent Fe,.

The ASP for ore with 35-45 per cent Fe will be 75 per cent of the ASP of 45-51 per cent Fe ore, while for below 35 per cent, it will be 50 per cent.

The move aims to bring low-grade resources into viable use, addressing high-grade deposit depletion and promoting mineral conservation.

The Ministry said, "Bringing low-grade resources into the usable category will address the concern of depletion of high-grade iron ore resources and will lead to a steady supply of minerals to the steel industry." —*PTI*

I-T staff union to protest over unmet demands

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

—AI

Two major employee associations of the Income Tax Department have written to the government stating that they would resort to a graded agitation schedule beginning 16 April if their "long pending" issues and "precarious" working conditions are not resolved.

The Joint Council Action (JCA), comprising the Income Tax Employees Federation (ITEF) and Income Tax Gazetted Officers' Association (ITGOA), represents about 97 per cent of the department's workforce that works to collect revenue for the government under the direct tax category.

Officers from the Indian Revenue Service (IRS) constitute the third association, and they lead the department as heads of various verticals.

The JCA, through a letter approached the Revenue Secretary under the Union Finance Ministry, with its ten-point grievances due to the "persistent apathy" of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) in resolving these issues.

"The impeded career progression and bleak prospects of promotion, irrational annual general transfers, precarious service conditions, unjustified work pressure, irrational and unrealistic targets and severe shortage of manpower and essential infrastructure have pushed our members to the brink," the JCA said.

If their issues are not addressed in a time-bound manner, they will resort to a seven-staged programme of agitation, beginning with a lunch hour demonstration at all offices on 16 April. It will be stepped up to a full-day strike on 13 May —*PTI*

The issues

The Joint Council Action said that the impeded career progression and bleak prospects of promotion, irrational annual general transfers, precarious service conditions, unjustified work pressure, irrational and unrealistic targets and severe shortage of manpower and essential infrastructure have pushed our members to the brink.

GTRI calls for cap on product testing charges

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The central government should limit testing charges for routine industrial products, says GTRI, as high costs under quality control orders (QCOs) could harm India's manufacturing and small importers.

GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava noted that the expanding QCO policy is imposing high testing and certification costs, risking the viability of many MSME importers and increasing market dominance by large players.

Charges under the Foreign Manufacturers Certification Scheme (FMCS) involve foreign suppliers appointing Indian representatives, submitting technical documents, undergoing inspections, and testing samples at BIS-approved labs. Srivastava added, "while large importers can spread these costs across high volumes, smaller firms importing specialised or low-volume products cannot," and upfront costs of Rs 15-20 lakh can make imports unviable.

GTRI recommends capping charges, recognising foreign lab reports, adopting risk-based norms, and conducting impact assessments to support 'Make in India' and small industry growth. —*PTI*

5-10% HIKE EXPECTED

India Inc bets on mid-level talent: Report

MUMBAI, 14 APRIL

—FREEPIK

Amid concerns over attrition, India Inc expects hiring to remain focused on mid-level roles, with salary hikes likely to stay moderate at around 5-10 per cent in 2026-27, a report said on Tuesday.

Hiring demand is expected to be concentrated at the mid-level, with 49 per cent of respondents identifying mid-level professionals as the primary focus area, according to a report by workforce staffing services and HR solutions Genius HRTech.

In terms of overall workforce expansion, the report revealed that 28 per cent of organisations plan to increase hiring significantly by more than 10-15 per cent, while 43 per cent expect only minimal growth within 0-5 per cent.

On the compensation front, organisations are preparing for a competitive salary landscape in 2026-27, as 34 per cent of respondents plan salary increases exceeding 10 per cent, while 46 per cent anticipate moderate increments between 5-10 per cent, the report revealed.

Regulatory and labour reforms are expected to play a crucial role, with 57 per cent of organisations indicating significant restructuring of compensation frameworks to ensure compliance, keeping in mind the restructuring of the Labour Codes.

Increment distribution is expected to favour mid-senior level employees at 48 per cent, followed by junior and senior levels at 26 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively.

The report also revealed that diversity trends indicate gradual progress, with 27 per cent of organisations expecting a balanced 50:50 male-to-female hiring ratio and 31 per cent projecting a 60:40 male-to-female hiring split. —*PTI*

Rupee likely to touch Rs 93.50/$ amid oil shock & dollar strength: Report

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Indian Rupee is expected to face intense pressure this week, likely testing the Rs 93.50 per dollar levels, as it navigates a "triple threat" of geopolitical escalation, surging energy costs, and a resurgent US Dollar, according to a report by Union Bank of India (UBI).

"The outlook for the Indian Rupee this week is decidedly bearish," the report said. The breakdown of US-Iran diplomatic efforts and the implementation of a naval blockade in the Persian Gulf have reignited fears of a catastrophic disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, pushing Brent crude above $102 per barrel.

The report notes that the Rupee's immediate trajectory will be dictated by whether Brent crude stabilises or continues its climb.

The domestic currency has witnessed sharp two-way volatility over the past week. It briefly recovered from record lows of Rs 95.23 per US dollar before weakening again towards the Rs 93.30 per dollar level.

The movement has largely been driven by rapidly evolving developments related to the US-Iran conflict and its impact on global oil markets.

The report noted that crude oil has once again emerged as the key macro driver for the Indian currency. —*ANI*

RCB eye another batting firework against LSG

RCB are currently third on the table with six points

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Royal Challengers Bengaluru will rely on their fearsome batting unit to fire again as they look to dismantle an inconsistent Lucknow Super Giants and pull clear of the mid-table logjam in their Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday.

The Royal Challengers are currently third on the table with six points, and four other teams are chasing the reigning champions with four points each.

The Bengaluru outfit is two points adrift of leaders Rajasthan Royals and a point behind Punjab Kings.

But in reality, no team in this edition of the IPL has driven fear into the hearts of bowlers more than RCB.

Rajasthan's aura has been built around Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's flashing blade, while Punjab has been more solid than flamboyant, building its legacy around calculated chases.

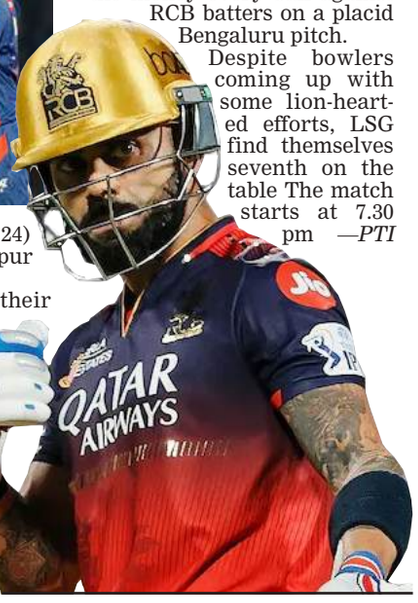
But RCB have fired in unison. They have resembled a battering ram, and it reflects in the strike rates of their top five. Virat Kohli (162), Phil Salt (178), Rajat Patidar (214), Tim David (221), and Devdutt Padikkal (201) have put all comers through the wringer in IPL 2026.

They will also want to cash in on the home stretch of three matches the LSG match will be followed by fixtures against Delhi Capitals (April 18) and Gujarat Titans (April 24) before travelling to Raipur for two 'home' contests.

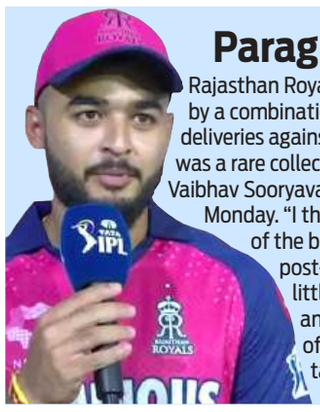
But will they meet their match in the Super Giants' bowling attack at the Chinnaswamy?

The LSG attack, comprising veteran India pacer Mohammed Shami, Prince Yadav, and Digvesh Rathi, has been impressive so far, finding a way to keep the opposition largely under check. Shami's economy of 6.2 is best in the league among regular bowlers so far, but the trio will need to be on the money every ball against RCB batters on a placid Bengaluru pitch.

Despite bowlers coming up with some lion-hearted efforts, LSG find themselves seventh on the table The match starts at 7.30 pm *—PTI*



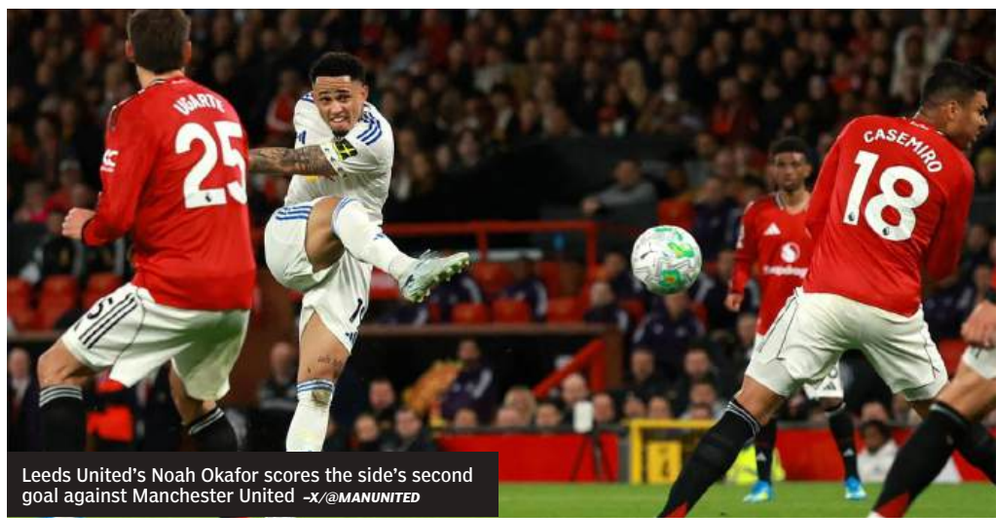
Parag says RR is undone by 'a mix of variables' against SRH



Rajasthan Royals captain Riyan Parag said his team's first IPL defeat of the season was caused by a combination of factors, including his usually explosive batters' inability to read the pace of deliveries against Sunrisers Hyderabad here. After an underwhelming display with the ball, it was a rare collective failure of Rajasthan's explosive top order, comprising Yashasvi Jaiswal, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, and Dhruv Jurel, as SRH handed the Royals a 57-run hammering here on Monday. "I think it was a mix of everything. I felt we were a little surprised by what the pace of the ball was when it left the hand and how it came off the wicket," Parag said at the post-match press conference. "...I think Vaibhav expected it a little quicker, came a little stickier. Same for Dhruv, nipped back in. Jaiswal, he hits that 9 out of 10 times, and that stopped. "I got a really full ball, I couldn't hit that. I won't say we were of a lot of variables that came into play, hence we couldn't connect those shots," taken over the RR captaincy this season.

Dilshan Madushanka to replace injured Brydon Carse in Sunrisers Hyderabad squad – *PTI*

PREMIER LEAGUE



Leeds United's Noah Okafor scores the side's second goal against Manchester United *-X/@MANUNITED*

Leeds grab 2-1 win over Man United as Martinez sees red

MANCHESTER, 14 APRIL

Leeds United's Noah Okafor scored twice as his side grabbed a morale-boosting 2-1 Premier League away win over bitter rivals Manchester United, who had Lisandro Martinez sent off in the 56th minute for pulling the hair of Dominic Calvert-Lewin.

Manchester United remain third in the table on 55 points, ahead of Aston Villa on goal difference, while 15th-placed Leeds put some more daylight between them and the teams battling relegation by moving up to 36 points, six ahead of Tottenham Hotspur in 18th.

Lisandro Martinez is set to miss some huge Manchester United matches as he serves a suspension after being sent off against Leeds.

The Argentine made a long-awaited comeback from a calf injury to start in place of the suspended Harry Maguire as Daniel Farke's side visited Old Trafford, but his evening did not go to plan.

Noah Okafor's first-half brace left United chasing the game in the second half, and Martinez saw red after appearing to grab a handful of Dominic Calvert-Lewin's bun. United fell to a 2-1 defeat thereafter. The incident was caught by VAR, and Paul Tierney gave the centre-back his marching orders after a short review. Tierney's decision has sparked controversy, with Michael Carrick describing the decision as 'shocking' and 'one of the worst I've seen'. Bruno Fernandes, meanwhile, was booked for dissent after enthusiastically protesting.

The decision followed the letter of the law, though the Premier League referee's handbook does state that a hair pull must be forceful to warrant a sending off, and debate will surely rage for some time over the semantics of the incident.

Martinez, though, now finds himself facing an enforced spell on the sidelines, provided the club decides not to appeal the decision. *—PTI*

Lisandro Martinez *-PTI*

-PTI

Muzarabani banned from PSL for two years

KARACHI, 14 APRIL

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday imposed a two-year ban on Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani from participating in the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Muzarabani, who had signed a deal with Islamabad United for the 2026 season, later pulled out of the PSL to participate in the Indian Premier League (IPL). The lanky pacer was roped in by IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) ahead of the ongoing season. "Following a thorough disciplinary review, the PCB has announced that Zimbabwean cricketer Blessing Muzarabani is declared ineligible to participate in the next two (2) editions of the HBL PSL, effective immediately.*—PTI*

-PTI

Wisden awards: Deepti, Abhishek are best players

LONDON, 14 APRIL

Indian cricketers dominated the Wisden Almanack 2026 honours, securing seven of the nine awards, with Deepti Sharma and Abhishek Sharma leading the way after being named Women's Cricketer of the Year and T20 Cricketer of the Year respectively. Shubman Gill, Mohammed Siraj, Rishabh Pant and Ravindra Jadeja were named among Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year, following their exploits in last year's Test series in England.

The only non-Indian winners were premier Australian pacer Mitchell Starc, who was named Men's Cricketer of the Year, and England batter Haseeb Hameed, who was also included among the Five Cricketers of the Year.

Deepti earned the honour after emerging as the top-wicket taker.*—PTI*

Munich Open: Zverev begins with a hard-fought win over Kecmanovic

MUNICH, 14 APRIL

Alexander Zverev fought to a 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7/2) win over Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic in the first round of the ATP event in Munich on Tuesday.

Reigning champion Zverev seemed in control after taking the first set, but the third-ranked German made a series of errors as Kecmanovic began to show more resistance.

World number 58 Kecmanovic rallied to win the second set and forced a final-set tiebreak against the top seed.

In chilly, windy conditions in the Bavarian capital, Zverev eventually shook off Kecmanovic after two hours and 18 minutes.

The 28-year-old will face Canada's Gabriel Diallo in the last 16. Zverev has won the Munich title three times, in 2017, 2018, and last year.

Kecmanovic, 26, is the only player other than Jannik Sinner to have defeated Zverev since his semi-final exit at the Australian Open in January. He beat Zverev in the second round in Acapulco in February.

Earlier on Tuesday, sixth seed Luciano Darderi beat China's Zhang Zhizhen 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 6-1, while Denis Shapovalov defeated eighth seed Tallon Griekspoor 6-4, 3-6, 6-2. *—PTI*

NEW TRIAL OVER MARADONA'S DEATH RESUMES IN ARGENTINA AGAINST 7 HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

BUENOS AIRES, 14 APRIL

The trial of seven health care professionals accused of negligence in the death of football great Diego Maradona resumed on Tuesday, nearly a year after the original proceedings collapsed when a presiding judge stepped down after appearing in a documentary about the case.

The negligence case centres on seven medical professionals accused of failing to provide adequate care in the weeks leading up to Maradona's death five years ago at a home outside Buenos Aires. Maradona, widely regarded as one of the greatest football players of all time, died at age 60 from cardiac arrest while recovering from a procedure to treat a blood clot on his brain. The seven defendants are charged with culpable homicide, a crime similar to involuntary manslaughter, which alleges that the accused were aware that their reckless conduct posed a risk and failed to prevent it. If convicted, they face prison sentences ranging from eight to 25 years.

Defence attorneys argue that the captain of Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning team suffered from multiple serious medical conditions and that no crime was committed.

Maradona had suffered a series of medical problems, some because of an excess of drug and alcohol consumption. He was reportedly near death in 2000 and 2004.

Among those on trial are physician Leopoldo Luque, Maradona's personal doctor during the final years of his life, psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, and psychologist Carlos Diaz. Hearings will take place twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Slightly less than 100 witnesses are expected to testify, including family members, people close to the former player, medical professionals, and police officers *—PTI*

-PTI

Hosting debut for Uttarakhand with U-19 girls team event

DEHRADUN, 14 APRIL

Uttarakhand marks a significant milestone in its sporting journey as it hosts the UTT 87th Inter-State Junior and Youth National Table Tennis Championships for the first time.

The Girls' Under-19 Team competition is set to begin on Wednesday at the newly built Multipurpose Hall in Parade Ground. The boys' team events and other categories will follow from the sixth day, after a transition day, with the contingent scheduled to arrive on the fifth day.

The occasion adds an extra layer of excitement to an already high-stakes event, as 29 teams from across the country have assembled to vie for top honours.

The competition format ensures that quality and depth will play a decisive role.

Teams have been seeded based on the cumulative ranking points of their top three players, with each side allowed a maximum of four members.

Tamil Nadu leads the field with a formidable lineup and the highest cumulative points, making them early favourites. West Bengal and Delhi follow closely, both equipped with multiple high-ranking players capable of delivering under pressure. *—PTI*

Ayush Shetty enters top 20 in BWF rankings after Badminton Asia Championships medal

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Ayush Shetty entered the world top 20 for the first time, jumping up seven places to reach the career high ranking of 18 in the BWF men's singles Ranking on Tuesday. Ayush had a historic silver medal-winning run last week at the Badminton Asia Championships in China, just falling short of the title to Shi Yu Qi in the final. Shi has now returned as the world's No. 1 men's singles player, dethroning Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand, who lost to Ayush Shetty in the semi-final last week.

The 20-year-old had just become the second Indian after Dinesh Khanna to reach the Badminton Asia Championships Singles final, ending a 61-year wait. India now has two male shuttlers in the World Top 20, as Lakshya Sen gained one position in rankings despite a first-round loss and now sits in 11th place. In the women's singles, PV Sindhu remained in 13th place as the top-ranked Indian in this event, followed by Unnati Hooda (23rd) and Tanvi Sharma (35th). Meanwhile, the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty held on to their 4th rank despite a withdrawal last week due to injury.

As Li Ning looked to capture the Indian badminton market share dominated by Yonex

-PTI

ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY

AIFF responds to racial abuse complaints

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Tuesday said it has referred complaints of racial abuse during the Indian Super League to the Disciplinary Committee for further investigation.

The development comes a day after Kerala Blasters sent a complaint of racism against its defender, Fallou Ndiaye, during the ISL match against Bengaluru FC at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium. During the game, Ndiaye, who is from Senegal, was subject to racial slurs, videos of which have been widely circulated on social media. "The AIFF maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards racism. The complaints have been referred to the Disciplinary Committee, an independent judicial body, for examination in accordance with the AIFF Disciplinary Code. The AIFF will refrain from any further comments while the proceedings are ongoing," the Federation said in a statement.

"The Indian Football family stands resolutely against racism. Those who bring hatred into our stadiums have no place in our game."

"The Club has taken note of an appalling incident which has occurred during our last game, where one of our players was subjected to blatant racist chants," the club said in an official statement.

"The Club strongly condemns this act and has formally raised this matter with the relevant ISL and AIFF authorities. We will also pursue appropriate action to protect the integrity of our player.

"There is no place for racism in our game." *—PTI*

Paraguay and Turkey in World Cup Group D

NEW YORK, 14 APRIL

Paraguay and Turkey are heading into their World Cup Group D matchups.

The Group D games will be played in Vancouver, British Columbia; Seattle; Santa Clara, California, south of San Francisco; and Inglewood, California, next to Los Angeles.

This group is one of only four played within one time zone, joined by Group G on the West Coast and C and I on the East Coast. The Crescent Stars reached the semifinals of the 2002 World Cup and 2008 European Championship but missed five straight World Cups before qualifying this year by beating Kosovo in a playoff. This will be just the third World Cup appearance for the Turks, who reached the tournament for the first time in 1954.

La Albirroja earned the sixth and final automatic berth from South America with a 0-0 draw against Ecuador, returning to soccer's top event for the first time since 2010. Paraguay will be appearing in its ninth World Cup. *—PTI*